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Thursday, 19 September 2002, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: We shall now continue the general debate.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lassana Traore, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali.

Mr. Traore (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to tell you, Sir, how pleased my delegation is to see you presiding over the work of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. To your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, I should also like to express my sincere and warm congratulations on the competence, devotion and authority with which he guided the work of the fifty-sixth session.

I should also like to express again to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the Organization, the warm congratulations and profound gratitude of the Government of Mali for the effectiveness and wisdom he has shown in managing the concerns of the international community in a particularly difficult context. I take this opportunity to reiterate to the Secretary-General the thanks of His Excellency Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali, for the confidence that the Secretary-General has placed in him in seeking solutions to certain conflicts that are shaking Africa. He expresses Mali 's readiness to continue to work for the preservation of international peace and security, particularly in Africa.

Mali wishes to welcome to the Organization Switzerland and Timor-Leste, whose admission strengthens the universal character of the United Nations.

The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is opening in an international context marked by the persistence of areas of tension, of development inequalities and of growing poverty among the peoples in developing countries, of the sad consequences of globalization, of natural disasters and of the extremely difficult consequences of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, whose first anniversary the international community has just commemorated. At the time, Mali vigorously condemned those attacks, which nothing can justify. Since then, it has participated in the great international campaign of the fight against terrorism. In so doing, it has ratified all international legal instruments related to the fight against terrorism. Likewise, important means and mechanisms have been put in place so that Mali 's national territory cannot be used for the preparation or perpetration of terrorist acts.

In order to meet the terrorist threat, it is important that the international community strengthen cooperation among its members. Furthermore, Mali calls for integrated and sustained global action, in which the United Nations should play the premier role. It reiterates the appeal of Africa, of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of the Islamic

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Conference for the holding of an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations aimed at swiftly concluding a universally accepted legal instrument on international terrorism.

In Mali, the year 2002 was devoted to the holding, for the third time, of pluralistic, democratic and peaceful elections, at the outcome of which His Excellency Mr. Amadou Toumani Touré assumed the country 's highest post. Those elections are sufficient proof that Mali 's democratic institutions have taken root, and they support the democratic culture of the Malian people.

Here, I must express, on behalf of the people and the Government of Mali, my heartfelt thanks to all our partners for their contribution to the organization, the holding and the success of those elections. Mali is deeply attached to the consolidation of the rule of law, to the preservation of peace and security and to the improvement of the living conditions of populations. In that regard, our conviction remains that we must deepen, promote and respect those values.

For Mali, republican and democratic institutions must be renewed only through democratic institutional mechanisms that have been established in advance. The strengthening of good governance, the consolidation of the democratic process, food security, the improvement of the educational and health systems, the organization and effective functioning of justice, actions to promote children and women, and the fight against poverty and corruption are, inter alia, the challenges to which the new Government of Mali is committed to face.

Likewise, as part of its policy of economic and social development, Mali is working, with the help of its development partners, to implement macroeconomic reforms designed to re-launch the process of growth and development.

Mali is resolutely determined to guarantee individual security in all its dimensions. That why my country is a full-fledged member of the Human Security Network. It fully agrees that there is a need to harmonize efforts with regard to the destruction of anti-personnel landmines and the fight against the illicit trade in and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, with a view to adopting a United Nations programme of action to reduce the human suffering caused by those scourges.

Stability, peace and security are prerequisites for any process of true development in Africa. Despite the significant progress made in resolving certain African conflicts, our continent continues to be faced with a number of ongoing problems, including debt, the continuing fall in the price of raw materials, the democratic deficit, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, malaria and difficulties related to humanitarian assistance. Those issues constitute a serious impediment to development efforts in Africa.

Mali welcomes the fact that the long fratricidal conflict in Angola has come to an end and pays a well-deserved tribute to the people and the leaders of Angola for the courage that they have shown and the efforts that they are continuing to make to consolidate peace and bring about national reconciliation.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations for its valuable contribution to the search for a resolution of the Angolan conflict.

I should also like to pay tribute to my compatriot, the late Alioune Blondin Beye, a talented diplomat who was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Angola from 1994 until the time of his death in June 1998. Alioune Blondin Beye made the supreme sacrifice on behalf of peace in Angola.

The recent signing of a peace agreement between the main parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a further reason for hope. These glimmers of hope for conflict management on the continent will require intense support from the international community, which must provide further support for Africa's efforts through in the form of resources and mechanisms that are capable of providing security and promoting development, stability and peace.

The launching of the African Union, which has replaced the Organization of African Unity, certainly represents the most decisive historic and political event on the African continent this year. The African Union will enable the continent to plan for its future more clearly, take responsibility for its own development, prevent and manage conflict and promote partnership and international cooperation that is better adapted to the expectations of the population.

The recent adoption at Durban of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security

Council of the African Union, a standing decision-making body for conflict management and resolution in Africa, represents an important step forward in the setting up of a collective rapid-reaction security system designed to facilitate an appropriate and effective regional response in dealing with conflict situations and crises in Africa. It is also the appropriate tool to bolster the efforts of the Security Council in fulfilling its main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in particularly in Africa. Mali has already begun to take the necessary measures to ratify that important instrument.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) also deserves ongoing support from the international community. Indeed, NEPAD offers the international community a historic opportunity to establish a credible partnership with Africa — a partnership founded on shared responsibility.

Mali remains deeply concerned about the dramatic developments of the situation in the Middle East. The responsibility of the international community in dealing with that situation remains a commitment aimed at a global, just and lasting peace in the Middle East — a peace founded on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

The creation of a Palestinian State — the central issue of the Middle East question — side by side with Israel, within safe and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1397 (2002), would be the best guarantee of a just and lasting peace in the region.

On a different subject, Mali accords priority to international cooperation on the basis of international law in the search for a lasting solution to conflicts that are of concern to the international community. This principle should apply to the handling of the Iraqi issue.

The creation of the International Criminal Court, whose Statute was adopted in Rome, will not only make it possible to bring to justice those who commit the most serious crimes that infringe on the dignity of the human person, but also will provide an instrument of deterrence that contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security. In this respect, my country would like to reaffirm its full support for the fight against impunity and for full respect for human dignity.

My country would like to appeal to those countries that have still not acceded to the Statute of the International Criminal Court to do so in order to strengthen the legitimacy of that institution.

We are faced with a number of economic problems that are impeding the full growth of several of our States. The globalization of the economy has contributed greatly to a serious imbalance whose chief victims are the developing countries. It has led in particular to the impoverishment of a large number of people, to environmental degradation and to large-scale migration.

External debt is a heavy burden for poor countries. The money used to service the debt has to come from the meagre resources of those countries, which seriously handicaps any attempt to re-launch growth and development. Despite the measures agreed to aimed at alleviating the debt burden for poor countries and allowing access to the markets of the countries of the North, the inequalities persist and poverty continues to worsen.

New measures designed to establish closer links between debt- and poverty-reduction activities should continue. More flexible mechanisms need to be set up, however, in order to mobilize and utilize the resources generated by the application of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. In this respect, it is highly desirable for the developed countries and the international financial institutions to envisage measures capable of enabling the developing countries to move further towards sustainable development and to benefit from globalization. Fulfilling the development objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration would bring that about.

Mali warmly welcomes United Nations initiatives in support of the least developed countries, as exemplified by the Brussels Programme of Action. My country welcomes the holding in March 2002 at Monterrey of the International Conference on Financing for Development and, more recently, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The conclusions and recommendations that came out of those two important meetings reflect the determination of the international community to commit itself in a resolute manner to achieving the objectives contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The Government of Mali also encourages institutions and Governments throughout the world to implement the relevant provisions contained in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, since it is true that development policies and strategies intended to reduce poverty must necessarily take account of the problems of ageing.

The democratization and restructuring of the main organs of the United Nations desired by the overwhelming majority of Member States, would greatly contribute to peace and security in the world. In particular, the democratization of the Security Council, whose structure no longer reflects the realities of today's world, would reflect our common determination to make it a more effective, more legitimate and more representative body.

Our peoples are waiting. They are waiting for us to lead them forward towards rebirth in the new century, towards the building of a new world, rich in diversity, more just and more united.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fathulla Jameel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives.

Mr. Jameel (Maldives): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to join others in congratulating you on your election to the presidency of this session of the General Assembly. This is not only a recognition of your wisdom and ability to successfully guide the work of this important session, but also a demonstration of the high regard the international community has for your country, the Czech Republic.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, for the exemplary manner in which he guided the work of the fifty-sixth session.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to Switzerland on its admission to the membership of this Organization. We are eagerly looking forward to welcoming the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste into our midst shortly.

Eight days ago, the friendly people of the United States remembered, with profound sorrow, the death and destruction inflicted upon them by murderous acts of terrorism on 11 September 2001. Those brutal and cowardly acts sent waves of deep shock and anger throughout the world. My country was quick to condemn the attacks and to express its solidarity with the people of the United States. We shared their grief, and we extended our sympathies to the American people. Today, with our modest resources, we stand with the international community in the global fight against terrorism and in banishing the scourge of terrorism from the face of the earth.

My country believes that the United Nations, the primary global organization responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, must play the central role in the fight against terrorism. We were encouraged by the swift response of the Security Council, taken under Chapter VII of the Charter, after the horrifying attacks on the United States last year. Total compliance with Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which details the measures to be taken by the international community in combating terrorism, is of utmost importance. My country also believes that it is essential to strengthen the existing national, regional and international legal framework against terrorism if we are to effectively fight this war. The proposed comprehensive convention on international terrorism and the international convention for the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism need to be finalized as soon as possible.

The unprecedented economic ramifications of the events of Nine-Eleven were enormous. Small island developing States like my own have not recovered from the adverse economic effects of the events yet, thus demonstrating the vulnerability of our economies. Our losses were immeasurable. Nonetheless, recent developments in the area of international economic cooperation appear encouraging. The Doha agenda and the Monterrey consensus offer new hope for achieving sustainable development. The transformation of those commitments into concrete action, and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depends on forging a new form of partnership with shared responsibility between the developing countries and the rest of the world. We expect the developed countries to fulfil their part of the understandings, while the developing countries endeavour to fulfil their obligations.

My country, the Maldives, has made considerable economic strides in the past. With the continued assistance of the international community, we have demonstrated the effectiveness of official development assistance (ODA). It is true that two decades of political stability, and sound social and fiscal policies,

combined with hard work, have improved the standard of living of our people. We are immensely proud of our modest achievements and grateful to those who helped us. Yet, our narrow economic base poses formidable challenges to our desire for continued economic growth.

Globalization and trade liberalization have added new dimensions to our difficulties. The inherent structural weaknesses of our economy convince us that the preferential access to markets and concessional capital we now enjoy as a least developed country have no alternative form of compensation. Quite simply, we cannot sustain our development without these special treatments.

These considerations compel us to strongly resist the call for the graduation of our country from the list of least developed countries. We genuinely believe that the international community should continue assisting us in our quest to overcome the structural constraints impeding our arrival at a level of sustainable growth until we overcome the inherent vulnerabilities of our economy.

The Committee for Development Policy will present its recommendations on the question of graduation of the Maldives from the list of least developed countries to the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in the year 2003. We urge the Committee to complete the necessary groundwork, in accordance with all the relevant Economic and Social Council and General Assembly resolutions, before it gives its views on this very important matter.

A fortnight ago, we met in Johannesburg at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to take stock of our achievements since the Earth Summit in Rio 10 years ago. The facts are disappointing and discouraging. What we have achieved over the past 10 years is far less than what we have not. And, while apathy keeps progress curbed, environmental degradation of the world is continuing unabated. If we are to halt and reverse environmental degradation, we must not only pledge urgent action but also take it. As President Abdul Gayoom of the Republic of Maldives emphasized in his address to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, for sustainable development to happen,

> "Agenda 21 must be implemented. The Kyoto Protocol must be universally honoured. The Barbados Programme of Action must be carried out. The Millennium Development Goals must be reached".

My country, the survival of which is threatened by climate change, therefore remains concerned over inaction and indifference with regard to the implementation of the plans of action for environmental protection and sustainable development.

Turning to another issue, we have been witnessing an unprecedented deterioration of the situation in Palestine and the Middle East. The Israeli Government has killed the peace process and has driven the region to the brink of war. Its acts of aggression and the use of excessive force, coupled with political assassinations, the destruction of vital installations and infrastructure, blockades and economic suffocation of the Palestinian people, are all designed to frustrate the prospects for an independent Palestinian State. We condemn these dastardly actions and call on the international community to persuade Israel to withdraw from all occupied Palestinian territories and to respect all relevant Security Council resolutions. The Maldives has consistently supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable rights and to establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds as its capital.

We believe that the United Nations has an important role to play in bringing the two sides back to the negotiating table. We recognize the efforts of the Quartet, and encourage its members, especially the United States, to remain actively engaged in the search for a just, permanent and lasting peace in the region.

Disarmament and arms control measures should remain a high priority on the international agenda. The international community must unite and act collectively to strengthen and enforce the non-proliferation regimes. The Maldives is party to all major multilateral instruments relating to arms control and disarmament, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We call on those countries that are not party to those instruments to accede to them as soon as possible. Furthermore, my country believes that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace in various parts of the world can contribute immensely to the efforts of the international community in this regard.

As well, we should vigorously pursue our efforts and enforce verifiable measures to rid the world of biological and chemical weapons that can cause mass destruction. My country, therefore, believes that bilateral, regional and multilateral approaches must be reinforced and that they must complement one another if we are to free the world of those deadly weapons. We believe also that, on global issues, there should be a sincere commitment to multilateralism and trust in the multilateral institutions. The United Nations must not only be placed at the centre of multilateral processes, but should remain the principal player responsible for grappling with these important global issues, which have such a great bearing on international peace and security.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the firm commitment of the Maldives to the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We firmly believe that the United Nations requires reform and restructuring. The aim of the reform process should be the enhancement of the credibility, legitimacy and universal character of the Organization. This involves the reform of the Security Council, a new working relationship, and a strong enforcement regime within the United Nations and among its Member States.

Together with other members of the international community, the Maldives will work to uphold and promote the objectives of the United Nations. We remain convinced that the United Nations is the only organization that is capable of creating a more peaceful and prosperous world for humanity.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia.

Mr. Menagarishvili (Georgia): Allow me to begin by extending my warmest congratulations to you — my colleague Mr. Jan Kavan — on his election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I cannot but remember the tragedy of 11 September 2001, the anniversary of which we commemorated just a few days ago. That bloody act committed here in New York, the host city of the United Nations Headquarters, was directed not only against the United States but also against all the rest of us, the entire civilized world that the United Nations symbolizes. Georgia has been part of the anti-terrorist coalition from the very first day. I would like to assure the Assembly that Georgia has been doing everything in its power to be a dedicated partner in this struggle and that it will maintain the spirit of cooperation until the very, successful end.

The problem of international terrorism is complex and multidimensional, and I had intended to share our views and thoughts on that. However, the recent complications in Georgian-Russian relations have compelled me to shift the focus of my address. I am referring to the mounting aggressive attacks on my country's sovereignty emanating from the Russian authorities and media. On a daily basis, Georgia is being accused of harbouring terrorists, aiding fighters and fueling the conflict in Chechnya. This is a clear attempt to create an enemy image of Georgia in Russia's public opinion. Here I have to state clearly: this is utter nonsense.

We believe that the pressure exerted on my country under the pretext of these absurd accusations is being used by Russia as a smokescreen to hide its own failure to cope with the conflict in Chechnya. As President Shevardnadze stated in his letter, transmitted by our Permanent Representative in identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council, "It is hard to imagine a clearer example of confusing the cause and the effect". (*A/57/408, annex*)

The truth is that this tragic chain of events started with the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in which Chechen fighters, citizens of the Russia Federation, had been initially recruited, trained and sent to fight. Then, all of this boomeranged in the Chechen conflict against Russia, when those fighters turned their arms against their own patrons. As a result of two Chechen wars, Georgia has had to face an influx of thousands of Chechen refugees, and armed gangs of criminals forced into Georgia, followed by insistence from the Russian side on permitting a military operation against them on Georgian soil. All this meant a spillover of the endless and bloody war into Georgia, which we certainly could not allow. We are able to take, and are already taking, all necessary measures to uproot any possibility of the use of our territory by terrorists.

Although it is evident that the problem of the Pankisi Gorge of Georgia is a side effect of the war in Chechnya, and not vice versa, the violations of airspace and attacks against the sovereign territory of Georgia

by Russian military jets and helicopters have acquired a permanent character. The most recent air strike took place on 23 August 2002, causing civilian casualties. Georgia has irrefutable documentary and factual evidence of the attack, which has also been confirmed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe border monitoring operation.

Despite the clear evidence, the Russian military leadership cynically denies these facts, trying to avoid an objective investigation in spite of their official statements that one will be carried out. Moreover, unfolding hysteria in Russia on the issue of the Pankisi Gorge has culminated in statements by Russia's President and its military openly threatening Georgia with aggression. These actions not only gravely endanger peace and security in the region, but also undermine the efforts of the global anti-terrorist coalition to fight against this menace.

What is at stake here is not only the sovereignty and independence of Georgia, but also the very fundamentals of the current international system. That is why we have brought this issue to this high forum.

As I mentioned, Georgian special forces, aided by our friends, are conducting an operation to restore law and order in the Pankisi Gorge and the surrounding area. We already have achieved positive results and are ready to cooperate with all concerned parties, including Russia. Moreover, we are open to all international transparency measures.

We call on the Russian side to reconsider their approach and, as President Shevardnadze stressed in his letter, we appeal "to the leadership of Russia and the President himself to find a common tongue [and] to rise above the existing problems". (*ibid.*) We strongly believe that there is no other way out.

Speaking about the conflicts in the Caucasus, I would like to draw attention to the most painful issue: the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, where our joint efforts have not yet been successful. I believe that the major mistake made by the international organizations was to give the so-called Abkhaz authorities an opportunity to engage them in endless and absurd disputes because of which the bases of the peace process were ignored.

First, there is Georgia, a full-fledged member of the international community, whose internationally recognized territory is being violated by the non-legitimate, pseudo-Abkhaz regime based on hostility and ethnic cleansing. No positive results can be achieved if the two sides are treated in the same manner, if they are viewed as equally responsible and if a policy of pleasing both of them is pursued.

Secondly, there is the fate of the more than 300,000 refugees and internally displaced persons who have been ousted from their homeland and deprived of their basic human rights, and whose prospect of return has for the past eight years failed to go beyond fruitless discussions. The years of ineffective negotiations merit only those conclusions.

I must excuse myself before the authors of the most recent Security Council resolution on this matter, Council resolution 1427 (2002), but I cannot agree with the softness of their statements. Even though the de facto Abkhaz leadership completely ignored and categorically refused to receive the document, "Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi and Sukhumi", elaborated by the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General, the arrogance of the separatist regime was responded to in the resolution only by a slight reproach.

To our surprise, the most recent report of the Secretary-General, based on information from the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, points to "a modest improvement in the human rights situation". (*S/2002/742, para. 23*) It is difficult to understand what kind of improvement is meant when the separatists insist that Georgian children should study Georgian as a foreign language at Georgian schools in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The tragedy in Abkhazia, Georgia, where hundreds of thousands, mostly ethnic Georgians, have been forcibly expelled from their homes, has numerous times been rightfully assessed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as ethnic cleansing. Thus, we can only be astonished that the United Nations is so reluctant to make the same statement. This is the more so as the Abkhaz side has never complied with any of the 28 Security Council resolutions adopted since 1993. I hope members would agree that such inconsistency only strengthens the separatists' self-confidence and increases their belief in their impunity.

In 1994 we made an unprecedented decision by asking the United Nations to permit the commencement of a peacekeeping operation engaging the

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), whereby the "collective" peacekeeping forces included only a Russian military contingent. The reason for this was the complete absence of other alternatives at that time. Regrettably, eight years of this operation have made clear that the Russian peacekeepers, acting under the CIS aegis, fail to ensure the security that is so necessary for the return of the internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes in Abkhazia, Georgia. In fact, the peacekeepers have established an artificial border between the territory controlled by the separatists and the rest of Georgia.

On that basis, we think it is high time to transform substantively the ongoing peacekeeping operation. In particular, we are in favour of introducing a civil police component and creating a joint Georgian-Abkhaz administration in the Gali district under international auspices. Considering the solid United Nations experience in the establishment and management of international police forces, we have high expectations of the Assembly's support.

We strongly believe that more active involvement of the international community, and primarily of the United Nations, is indispensable. We understand that the United Nations is currently involved in several peacekeeping operations. Irrespective of that fact, we hope that some resources can be found to ensure more active United Nations engagement in the resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

Speaking about the ineffectiveness of international efforts in resolving the Abkhaz conflict, we should admit that the lack of unanimity within the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General remains a serious impeding factor. That is why it took almost two years just to win consensus on the so-called Boden document. Moreover, we are repeatedly faced with actions by one of the members of the Group that are utterly inconsistent with the general approach.

At the end of 2000, the Russian Federation introduced a visa regime with Georgia. But contrary to the elementary norms of international law, the right to visa-free movement has been maintained for the secessionist regions of Georgia: the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions. Numerous protests by the Georgian side against this discriminatory decision have been simply ignored. Moreover, this was followed by the mass issue of Russian passports to the local population of these two separatist regions, and their mass conversion to Russian citizenship through simplified procedures. Here a question arises: how do these actions, named "legal expansion" even by the Russian media, contribute to a peaceful resolution of these conflicts?

I have to reaffirm that a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, remains the only acceptable option for my Government. But as I have already mentioned, regrettably, the Abkhaz side has categorically refused to consider the document that determines the political status of Abkhazia within the State of Georgia. Therefore, we have to admit that the entire peace process in Abkhazia, Georgia, is as much in jeopardy as it is in need of drastic changes. We call on the United Nations to address this problem.

Finally, United Nations reform has long been a topic of discussion. It is unfortunate that work in that regard has not progressed beyond an exchange of ideas. Too much time has been devoted to discussions on Security Council enlargement, the increase of the number of its permanent and non-permanent members, the change of procedures related to the right of veto and the adoption of joint decisions. Regrettably, there have been no practical results so far.

Here I would like to stress that Georgia reiterates its full support for the speedy realization of the aforesaid changes. We strongly support granting permanent membership to Germany and Japan, as well as the overall enlargement of the Security Council. We also insist on increased transparency in the work of the Council.

The world community is currently facing numerous challenges which require more decisive and radical steps. And I cherish the hope that this forum will be courageous enough to make them without delay.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Arjon Jung Bahaur Singh, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Nepal.

Mr. Singh (Nepal): Let me begin by taking this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election to preside over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. My delegation pledges its full support to you and has full confidence in your ability to steer the session to a successful conclusion. I would also like to express my delegation's profound appreciation to your predecessor,

His Excellency Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the excellent manner in which he guided the fifty-sixth session.

Our tributes are also due to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to carry out the mandate of the United Nations.

Nepal congratulates Switzerland and welcomes it as a new Member of the United Nations. We also look forward to having the privilege of welcoming East Timor as a new Member in a few days.

We are meeting here under the long and dark shadow of the terrorist attacks carried out against our host city on 11 September 2001. The trauma and tragedy the attacks wrought are still fresh in our memory. Our heart goes out to the children who lost their parents and to the families who lost their near and dear ones.

Itself a victim of terrorism, Nepal understands the pain and peril terrorists brutally perpetrate on individuals and societies. As globalization and technological advances have made it possible for terrorists to move people and funds across the world with ease, the concerted efforts of nations will be essential to stamp out terrorism. We therefore support the ongoing global war on terrorism and see the need for better enforcement of existing international law and for the conclusion of a comprehensive global convention for that purpose. In Nepal we have enacted a new law in this regard, as well as rules and regulations that include provisions of relevant international treaties to which we are a party.

Being opposed to democracy and freedoms, the so-called Maoist terrorists in Nepal have been taking innocent lives, abducting children to work as child soldiers, and destroying private homes, schools and vital infrastructure. In view of this, His Majesty's Government has recognized them as terrorists and has launched a campaign to protect people and property. We appreciate the moral and financial support from our friends in this effort. We also deplore any suggestion that tends to equate the Government's obligation to protect its citizens with the terrorists' dastardly acts of violence.

Even though terrorism is the menace of the moment, other peace and security problems continue to trouble the world. The Middle East is burning and Africa is boiling over with conflict. Tension also abounds elsewhere — in Asia, Europe and Latin America.

To find comprehensive peace in the Middle East, Nepal supports the time-bound implementation of Security Council resolution 1397 (2002) and of the Quartet agreement of April 2002.

Iraq must comply with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and the international community must respect the sanctity and integrity of the Charter of the United Nations in order to avoid setting fire to the wider region.

We are happy that Afghanistan is limping back to normalcy. Providing security coverage over the entire country should be the United Nations priority so that reconstruction can pick up momentum.

East Timor has emerged as a free South Pacific nation. We congratulate its people on their freedom and independence, and the United Nations on helping them through the transition.

It is encouraging that Sierra Leone has achieved a measure of stability. In order to achieve a wider peace, attempts must be redoubled to resolve the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Burundi.

The Balkans, Cyprus and the Korean peninsula should receive necessary support in their quest for peace and harmony.

No durable peace will be possible without the prevention of conflicts and the resolution of disputes through peaceful means. Peacekeeping, disarmament and confidence-building are the pillars of the edifice of culture of peace. United Nations peacekeeping operations have proved very useful in helping to stabilize fragile situations during and after conflicts. Nepal is a major player in United Nations peacekeeping and has contributed more than 40,000 military and police personnel so far. Our peacekeepers have served the United Nations with outstanding competence and dedication, sustaining 42 casualties in the line of duty. Our commitment to United Nations peacekeeping operations remains robust. Supplying fully self-sustained troops is our goal, but that often becomes difficult for a poor country. Until we achieve our goal, the United Nations must continue to bridge the resource gap through innovative means.

In our view, the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound manner constitutes the cornerstone of the disarmament endeavour. We also stress the imperative of observing existing international treaties, ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and concluding a fissile material cut-off treaty. Nuclear-weapon-free zones and a guarantee not to use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States, and other confidence-building measures will help the process of nuclear disarmament. Equally important is the need to eradicate chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction.

Small arms have taken more lives than any other type of weapons. We welcome the agreement that emerged from the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects last year. Nonetheless, we underline the need for stricter controls on the possession of such arms by non-State actors.

United Nations Regional Centres for peace and disarmament are an important tool for building confidence and helping the process of disarmament in their respective regions. We are grateful to Member States for having designated Nepal as host of the Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific. It is, however, deeply troubling that the Centre is yet to move to Kathmandu, despite our full commitment to meeting all those obligations that other hosts have met. We urge the United Nations to relocate the Centre immediately and not to set terms and conditions over and above those that other hosts of similar Centres have accepted.

One may argue that not all conflicts are products of poverty. Yet people living in poverty, deprivation and despair easily become susceptible to the evil designs of extremist elements. Hence, poverty reduction and sustainable development are an inseparable part of efforts to prevent conflicts and terrorism and to promote peace.

Indeed, developing countries must bear the primary responsibility for their own development. Nepal has undertaken far-reaching reforms to liberalize the economy, optimize internal resources, attract foreign investment and protect the environment. Most of its public expenditure is invested in people and in poor areas. Measures have been taken to provide clean Government and improve overall governance.

However, our problems are so big and our resources so limited that without additional resources and market access we cannot accelerate our growth and sustain our development. Wealthy nations will therefore have to fulfil their commitments made at the Millennium Summit, as well as at the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences. We appreciate the pledges of the European Union and the United States to raise the level of their development assistance and urge them to keep their word.

Developing countries also need a conducive global economic climate to grow. For that to happen, rich nations must strive to lift the world economy out of the current recession and agree on major reforms in the international financial architecture.

More than others, least developed countries in Africa and elsewhere need increased assistance and support to break loose from their poverty trap. Developed nations should do everything in their power to meet the official development targets, provide duty-free and quota-free access for the products of the least developed countries to their markets and help implement other provisions of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Landlocked developing countries suffer the constraints of remoteness, high-cost economies and high transit costs. They need targeted assistance to overcome their specific hurdles, as do the small and poor island developing States. Nepal appreciates the United Nations for its important role in propelling development in developing countries. We also welcome the timely appointment of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Regional cooperation is a linchpin of attempts collectively to foster competitiveness, capacity and synergy. In South Asia, we are striving to build such cooperation under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Poverty alleviation, trade liberalization and technical cooperation have received the principal focus as precursors to the ultimate establishment of a South Asian economic union. The eleventh SAARC summit, which Nepal hosted in January, is a testament to member States' eagerness not to let their political differences affect the process of regional economic integration.

Nepal is fully committed to democracy, justice and human rights, including those of women and children. We are strengthening the values and

institutions of democracy and incorporating international human rights standards into our domestic laws. Our National Human Rights Commission is fully functional and the judiciary is being revitalized.

Sadly enough, there are nearly 20 million refugees around the world and many more internally displaced persons. In Nepal alone, there are over 100,000 refugees from Bhutan, deprived of their human rights at home. With a view to finding a durable solution to the problem, Nepal has engaged in bilateral negotiations with Bhutan for nearly a decade now. We call on Bhutan to take the negotiations as a matter of urgency and to pave the way for the earliest repatriation of the refugees.

Friendly countries, the United Nations system — particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme — and non-governmental organizations have been generously assisting us in the maintenance of the refugees. We express our appreciation to them for their help and urge them to continue it until the refugees return home.

Committed to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, Nepal underlines the need for United Nations reform, so that the Organization can meet the challenges before it. Therefore, revitalizing the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council is our priority. We favour reinforcing collaboration and complementarity between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council in their respective and related areas.

In our view, it is imperative to carry out a limited expansion of the Security Council membership in both categories, in a way that preserves the Council's flexibility and ensures equitable geographical representation. Reform of its working methods must also continue, with a view to enhancing transparency and improving the quality of consultations, particularly with troop-contributing countries.

Reform is equally essential within the Secretariat in order to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. Inter-agency coordination should also be upgraded.

Central to strengthening the United Nations are a vigorous Non-aligned Movement and a robust Group of 77. As a member of both, Nepal pledges to work with other countries to reinvigorate those bodies and to expand cooperation between them and the United Nations.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I must remind all the speakers once again that we had agreed at the beginning of the General Assembly to a time limit of 15 minutes. I strongly appeal to all members to reduce their prepared speeches to correspond to the agreed time limit.

I give the floor to Mr. Ali Abdi Farah, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti.

Mr. Farah (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): In a year of frightful tragedy and uncertainty, we were at least fortunate to have the charisma and leadership of Mr. Han Seung-soo, as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We also take this opportunity, Mr. President, to warmly congratulate you. We welcome the admission of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations family, and we are pleased at the future status of East Timor.

Under the enlightened leadership of Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations has rediscovered its relevance and its credibility. The reform measures he has implemented in recent years have enabled better coordination, better information-sharing, strengthened cohesion and a stronger strategic direction. Today the United Nations is working more and more closely with civil society to fight disease, address the challenges of poverty and respond to humanitarian crises. The Organization has also built a meaningful partnership with private sector enterprises, aimed at having developing countries benefit from their expertise and resources.

In that regard, the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Social Development, held in Johannesburg, have highlighted the unprecedented collaboration of various decision-makers, such as the United Nations, Governments, the private sector, international financial institutions and civil society.

Last week, during numerous commemorative ceremonies marking the horrible events of 11 September 2001, it was obvious that the world had been left traumatized. The reverberations of 11 September are still palpable throughout the United Nations system and the world. Indeed, within less than 24 hours, the Security Council took decisive action,

declaring that the 11 September attacks posed a threat to international peace and security. The important resolution on the fight against terrorism, Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), established a general procedure for verifying that every country is implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution, in order to eradicate that scourge.

Our resolve and determination to fight the threat of terrorism has undoubtedly been strengthened. The event itself alerted us to understanding and perceiving certain basic truths: human vulnerability and interdependence, the mobilization of a real international coalition in a short time, if need be, and our common resolve to eradicate the criminals who take innocent life, regardless of nationality, religion, sex and colour.

Presiding over the official ceremonies marking the anniversary at the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, said that:

> "Everything that we work for — peace, development, health, freedom — is damaged by this horror. Everything that we believe in — respect for human life, justice, tolerance, pluralism and democracy — is threatened by it. It must be defeated — and it must be defeated by a world acting as one." (*SG/SM/8376, para. 7*)

Therefore, combating terrorism requires more aggressive law enforcement measures everywhere.

In order to eradicate that horror, almost all countries have initiated an extraordinary series of actions, which have converged towards a complete reorientation of their policies, and particularly their foreign policies.

We have witnessed countries pursuing policies to reach out to others, to strengthen ties, to share global visions and to forge new strategic alliances. There is no doubt that the events of 11 September 2001 have led to the forming of new alliances and the strengthening of existing ones. However, it should not be a surprise that this has also generated stricter controls on the movements of people, particularly people of certain religions, backgrounds, complexions and regions. There is no doubt that we are living in a dangerous world in which vigilance is called for. However, while taking all that into account, let us be careful not to debase our grief for the victims and their families. As an editorial in a well respected newspaper stated:

> "What happened a year ago was terrible, but our shock and our respect for the suffering of those left behind should not cloud our judgement about unrelated issues". (The Independent, *11 September 2002*)

In the Secretary-General's words of 11 September 2002, on the first anniversary of that unspeakable tragedy:

> "Today, we come together as a world community because we were attacked as a world community.
>
> "...
>
> "May the memory of those who perished on 11 September serve to inspire a better, more just, more peaceful world for all of us". (*Press release SG/SM/8376*)

We hope that reason will prevail over fear, prejudice and hatred.

We welcome President Bush's commitment to explore fully the route of the Security Council in finding a way to draw Iraq towards a peaceful settlement of the outstanding issues. We also welcome Iraq's unconditional agreement to the return of the United Nations inspectors. That demonstrates its readiness and full cooperation in the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is, indeed, an encouraging development. We must dedicate ourselves to seeking a political solution within the framework of the United Nations. And the United Nations must act, and act very quickly, to put an end to the acute crisis which threatens to engulf an entire region and which could have an impact on the whole world. We all know the consequences of this crisis. Let us join together and work with determination to save the region, which is already in turmoil, from further conflict.

One of the gravest yet often overlooked threats to world peace is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Republic of Djibouti agrees with the Secretary-General that the route to peace in the Middle East was laid out decades ago in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and, recently, in resolution 1397 (2002), which stipulated the conditions of land for peace, an end to terror and to occupation and two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. Unfortunately, the focus has been shifted again by demands for a leadership change in the Palestinian Authority and for

political and security reforms, while simultaneously easing Israel's obligation to return to the negotiating table. The so-called sequential approach has always failed. It is urgent to move forward on all the issues, comprehensively and simultaneously.

To the political impasse should be added the economic destruction that has resulted from the insurmountable checkpoints, roadblocks, repeated incursions and the demolition of buildings and supply networks. The Palestinian people are in danger; a whole nation is virtually living in a prison. There is a growing, unprecedented humanitarian crisis, as stressed by a number of recent reports, describing in detail the levels of malnutrition, the drop-off in child immunization programmes, the increased risk of communicable diseases and runaway, endemic poverty. We remain steadfast in our condemnation of the violence and the killing of innocent civilians, whether they be Palestinians or Israelis. In this context, we welcome the latest plan of the Quartet, which outlines a three-phase road map to a comprehensive final settlement within a three-year period ending in 2005. To complete the process of bringing peace to the Middle East, Syria and Israel must reach an agreement on Israel's withdrawal to the borders of 1967.

A decade ago, the United Nations Conference on Climate and Development, held at Rio in 1992, gave us Agenda 21, which contains pertinent recommendations for lessening our wasteful consumer habits, protecting the atmosphere and the oceans, promoting sustainable agriculture and combating poverty. The subsequent thematic conferences further strengthened and broadened those recommendations, which have led to the promises set out in the Millennium Declaration, particularly on alleviating endemic and severe poverty. The goals, targets, commitments and deadlines for reducing poverty provide a new, decisive impetus. The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, made important and significant progress on crucial issues facing humankind today.

All those demonstrations of goodwill, however, need to be backed by concrete action. Speaking on behalf of the European Union during this General Assembly debate, the Prime Minister of Denmark expressed that sentiment:

> "At Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg, we reached consensus on what needs to be done. But knowing what has to be done is not enough. As world leaders, we must see that it is done". (*A/57/PV.2*)

In an increasingly demanding world, more and more references are made to good governance, investment in human capital and economic freedom as conditions for developing countries to qualify for development assistance. For its part, Africa has acknowledged to its partners the need to enhance the continent's responsibility in all areas of concern, including peace, stability, democracy, human rights and development. Through the New Partnership for Africa's Development, Africa has shown that it is able to shoulder greater collective responsibility in resolving its conflicts and in its development. In return, Africa keenly hopes that the financial constraints that have seriously hindered development and human dignity will be duly taken into account by our partners.

The issue of HIV/AIDS is one of the major concerns of our continent. More than 30 million people are infected in the world, and 75 per cent of those are Africans. The impact on development is disastrous. Life expectancy has decreased in some countries. Remarks made by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS are very clear:

> "If people are not alive, if people are not healthy — the people who are supposed to bring us sustainable development — then it won't happen. AIDS is a major crisis of human resources."

Based on the outcome of the peace and reconciliation conference held at Arta, Djibouti, our subregional organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), is working to organize a conference to bring together the national transition Government and other parties in Somalia — the regional administrations, factions and groups that opted to stay away from that historic meeting. The front-line States, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya, were mandated by the Ninth IGAD Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in January, to bring all of the components together with a view to completing the Arta process and thus paving the way for the emergence of a broad-based Government. Much has been accomplished, but it is fair to state that an enormous amount remains to be done.

The Republic of Djibouti believes that a realistic road map, consistent with current thinking is a capital

necessity. The majority view of the international community — including the United Nations, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, IGAD and the European Union — is that the Arta peace process remains the most viable basis for peace and national reconciliation in Somalia. There has been a willingness to complete, without preconditions, the Arta peace and reconciliation process. Without ambiguity, the international community has consistently called for dialogue involving the national transition Government and the other parties, in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance, with a view to establishing an inclusive Government in Somalia based on power sharing through a democratic process. Those are cardinal principles that should keep us on the right path. We cannot permit ourselves to stray from them.

Decisions related to the maintenance of international peace and security lie with the Security Council, which, despite the exponential increase of United Nations membership over the past three decades, has singularly remained an unrepresentative body. If confidence is to be placed in its decisions, there must also be an expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent member categories, giving both developed and developing countries the opportunity to become permanent members. The Working Group charged with studying that issue has thus far failed to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, and we see no clear prospect of the impasse being broken soon. More objectivity and clarity of vision are required in order to bring about that vital necessity.

Over the past decades, the people of the Horn of Africa have had their share of difficulties and suffering, and we are anxious to see peace, development and a reduction in conflict. For its part, my country, the Republic of Djibouti, is firmly convinced of the merit of good-neighbourly relations, cooperation and the creation of opportunities for the benefit of our peoples. We are resolutely committed to work hand in hand with our international partners in general, and with our friends in the region in particular, to resolve all outstanding issues that compromise trust and harmony.

The President: Once again, I appeal to Members to keep to the agreed time limit and to pay attention to the light on the speaker's table.

The General Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Ouédraogo, Minister of State, Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): As is the case every year, Burkina Faso is very pleased to take part in the regular session of the General Assembly, this great meeting of peoples united by the same destiny and motivated by the same ideal: to build a world of justice, love and peace. I am convinced, Mr. President, that the choice of a person of your great ability to preside over this fifty-seventh session will help us greatly. As we congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on that special honour, my delegation and I want to assure you of our full availability and cooperation for the success of your mission. We also want to express again our profound recognition of your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the competence with which he presided over the fifty-sixth session.

The quest for peace and security and the promotion of cooperation and development are the essential values that presided over the creation of the United Nations. Today, more than ever before, with the tragic events of 11 September 2001 — whose first anniversary we have just commemorated — those objectives have assumed a more immediate and urgent character, because world peace finds itself seriously threatened, in particular by international terrorism. We must all convince ourselves that the best response to international terrorism must proceed from collective action — in other words, from action by the entire international community.

As a member of that community, Burkina Faso — which has made the quest for peace a creed — reaffirms most solemnly, vigorously and unambiguously its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, whatever the motivations. Our determination to fight alongside the United Nations against that danger is unwavering, and our implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) was the subject of a report submitted to the Committee established pursuant to that resolution.

If the fight against terrorism henceforth occupies the spotlight, that must not obscure the imperative necessity of finding just and lasting solutions to international crises, particularly regional conflicts that so often feed and maintain that scourge. In this

connection, Burkina Faso welcomes the laudable initiatives of the United Nations to restore peace to many regions of the world, particularly Africa, where United Nations interventions — coupled with the initiatives of the Organization of African Unity, which has become the African Union, and those of the African subregional organizations — have made it possible to pacify many areas of tension and conflict that were ravaging parts of our continent.

We also welcome the gradual return to peace in Sierra Leone, in Angola, in the Great Lakes region, between Ethiopia and Eritrea and in Sudan, even if in the latter case we must regret the suspension of the agreement between the Government of that country and the armed rebellion.

In Western Africa, the hopes that arose at the end of the war in Sierra Leone unfortunately seem unfulfilled with the resumption of combat in neighbouring Liberia.

We cannot remain passive in the face of civil war in that sister country. Supported by others of goodwill and working within the framework of the process of the Economic Community of West African States, Burkina Faso convened a meeting in Ouagadougou from 8 to 11 July between a number of Liberian political parties, civil society organizations, associations and movements with a view to renewing the inter-Liberian dialogue. By agreeing to host that important meeting, my country, Burkina Faso, hoped to provide a further chance for dialogue, which the Liberians themselves desired. The initiative was supportive of efforts that had already been agreed upon in the context of the Rabat process and the Mano River Union.

This year has been particularly bloody in the Middle East. We cannot forget the excesses committed in Jenin and the harassment of President Arafat at Ramallah. The atrocities perpetrated every day against the unarmed Palestinian civilian population are a great cause for concern. Dialogue and negotiation must prevail over confrontation and violence. Burkina Faso reaffirms its support for the creation of an independent Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel, and we strongly urge the Security Council to ensure that its relevant resolutions are implemented.

With regard to Iraq, Burkina Faso welcomes the fact that reason has prevailed. We remain convinced that unilateral preventive action that is not authorized by the Security Council would have dire consequences for world peace. In that connection, we would like to pay tribute to the courageous decision of the Iraqi Government, which has just agreed to the return to Baghdad of United Nations weapons inspectors. We earnestly hope that that approach will ultimately lead to a definitive resolution of the crisis, especially since the sanctions imposed on that country are unjust and have made martyrs of the Iraqi people.

Burkina Faso has always made it clear that, apart from their unjust character, sanctions cannot properly resolve substantive problems but are counterproductive. We therefore request the lifting of all sanctions against Iraq, Cuba and Iran, as well as those imposed on Libya in connection with the Lockerbie question.

With regard to that latter question, Burkina Faso believes that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has fully discharged its obligations to the Security Council and that the sanctions imposed on it should now be lifted.

As a result of the demands of globalization, protecting the right to development has become the most important obligation for our countries. We therefore place great hope in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to which the Assembly has just devoted a special debate. We should recall that that new initiative shows how determined African leaders are to work tirelessly to rid the continent of poverty and marginalization.

During a recent forum that took place in Ouagadougou on the role of the private sector in the implementation of NEPAD, President Blaise Compaore stressed two major responsibilities that are incumbent upon the international community. The first relates to the enhancement and structural reform of official development assistance so as to adapt it to the needs of its beneficiaries and to improve its effect on their standard of living. The second relates to the problem of the access of African goods to the markets of the industrialized countries and the need to put an end to anti-competitive subsidies that run counter to the rules of the World Trade Organization.

More generally, the various meetings on development that have taken place this year, in particular the International Conference on Financing for Development, held at Monterrey, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held at Johannesburg, as well as the commitments set out in

the Millennium Declaration, open up new and encouraging prospects for developing countries.

It remains true, however, that the best form of development is that which takes into account the requirements of democracy and human rights. In this connection, I would like to assure the Assembly that my country will be resolute in ensuring that democracy becomes rooted in our political and institutional life, and we are taking significant and concrete actions to that end. The people of Burkina Faso have thus just renewed, for a third consecutive time and for a further five years, the mandate of the National Assembly. That election, in which all the political parties took part, took place in a calm, transparent and fair manner and has seated members of 13 political parties to legislate on questions of interest to the people of Burkina Faso.

The Government has also created a Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights to ensure respect for and the implementation of human rights in all their aspects. That is why my Government welcomes the election of Burkina Faso to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which will enable us to make a positive and active contribution to the work and the deliberations of that international body, which monitors the implementation of human rights throughout the world. Furthermore, our Government is determined to greatly enhance the status of women and children in line with the recommendations of the special session of the General Assembly on children.

It is thus clear that the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations is increasing on a daily basis, whether with regard to the promotion of peace and security, to economic cooperation or to activities in the social and humanitarian sphere.

The recent admission of Switzerland to the United Nations and the forthcoming admission of Timor-Leste further confirm the irreplaceable role of the United Nations as an means of ensuring international stability. It is precisely because of that universality that Burkina Faso is able to call upon the international community to consider the return of the Republic of China to this world Organization. Taiwan has clearly shown that it is a free, independent, democratic nation that enjoys all the attributes of a State under international law and that would thus be able to make a truly useful contribution to the building of a better future for humankind. The credibility of the United Nations is at stake in this respect.

In conclusion, I should like, on behalf of my country, to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his assured leadership of this Organization, as well as to the staff of the United Nations for their tireless contribution to the quest for peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Kamilov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as President for the current session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express appreciation to Mr. Han Seung-soo for his excellent organization of the work of the previous session of the General Assembly.

A year ago the world confronted acts of terror, unprecedented in scale and barbarity. We all remember the 11 September 2001 events in the United States and mourn the lives lost.

The events of last autumn, first of all, show that security threats are taking on new and dangerous forms. The phenomenon of terrorism has become more complex. At the current stage the world has to contend with organized international terrorism.

The United Nations devotes much attention to the fight against international terrorism. We welcome the United Nations Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which stipulates the establishment of the Counter-Terrorism Committee to coordinate and increase the efficiency of the international community's efforts to fight this most dangerous threat of the twenty-first century.

I would like to recall in this regard that Uzbekistan strongly urged establishment of such a committee within the United Nations as early as 1999.

Uzbekistan is one of the few countries that are parties to all twelve conventions on combating terrorism. We sincerely hope that the appeal by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the United Nations Member States to join and ratify these documents will be followed and put into practice.

Uzbekistan supports the international counter-terrorism coalition as a matter of principle and stands ready to make its contribution to enhance global and regional stability.

The events of 11 September made the world face up to the situation in Afghanistan and, one can say, opened the eyes of the international community to the fact that terrorism has no borders and only through joint efforts we can defeat this perilous challenge to humanity. In a strict and, I would say, categorical way the events of 11 September reminded everybody that twenty years of war turned Afghanistan into a breeding ground and hotbed of international terrorism that threatened not only neighbouring countries and nations, but all of humanity.

We are gratified today by the positive developments in that country; we welcome the convening of the Loya Jirga, and the transitional Government led by President Hâmid Karzai.

At the same time, despite the successful completion of the military phase of the counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, today there can be no room for complacency.

First, huge amounts of weapons accumulated during the long years of war in Afghanistan still remain in the possession of armed groups there. In this context there can be no justification for the attempts of certain States to supply ever more weapons to this long-suffering land.

To ensure stability and prevent military confrontation it is important to resolve the problems related to the reduction and collection of the huge amounts of weapons accumulated in Afghanistan. Clearing the Afghan territory of weapons arsenals belonging to criminal groups will also reinforce the activities of the United Nations and regional institutions to thwart the illicit arms trade.

Secondly, the post-war dislocation, economic disaster, as well as the lack of resources to rebuild Afghanistan, may become a catalyst for social unrest that could be used by certain armed groups inside and beyond Afghanistan to create a new round of military confrontation.

Thirdly, there are still various groups in the territory of Afghanistan, including remnants of the Taliban, that are capable of conducting subversive actions and guerrilla warfare. Confrontation continues among various warlord-leaders of different ethnic groups.

Fourthly, the situation on drug trafficking remains almost unchanged. Afghanistan is still the world's main supplier of opium and heroin. According to many international experts, the removal of the Taliban regime does not yet mean the elimination of the criminal narcotics business in Afghanistan. Today the whole world is seriously concerned about this problem. There is an urgent need for adequate measures and assistance on the part of the entire international community, as well as the active support of the Afghan authorities to combat narco-aggression.

The number of drug addicts in the world runs into the hundreds of millions of people. Proliferation of drug addiction undermines both the health of living generations and the gene pool of nations. This affects people in both the developed and developing countries. The Republic of Uzbekistan, making great efforts to fight drug production, abuse and trafficking, fully supports the measures undertaken by the United Nations and the international community to confront these threats.

I would like to underline that it is much easier and more effective to fight drug trafficking at the source. Therefore, we have to block the huge flow of the Afghan drugs right at the borders of the Central Asian States, rather than hunt for grammes and kilogrammes in Europe and other developed countries.

In this regard, it is advisable to shift from numerous counter-narcotics programmes of small efficiency to the concrete solution of this acute problem by allocating the United Nations-controlled resources and means to nip the narcotics trafficking at the source.

Today the attention of the entire international community is riveted on the issue of Iraq. In this regard we support the statement of United States President George Bush delivered in the United Nations from this very rostrum.

The measures towards resolution of the current situation proposed by the President of the United States deserve thorough consideration and may be taken as a basis for the elaboration of the position to be taken by the United Nations Security Council.

Uzbekistan attaches great significance to the strengthening of the global process of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Our country has already received credit for its activity in this field. The strategy of Uzbekistan in ensuring security is based on the country's participation in the United Nations-led

processes of disarmament and arms control and reduction.

Uzbekistan fully supports the principle of indivisibility of security and in this context, as an initiator of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, acknowledges responsibility for strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and takes active part in the elaboration process of international instruments in this field.

Uzbekistan proposes to sign the practically finalized and agreed draft of the document on the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia in Kazakhstan in the city of Semipalatinsk, the former site for hundreds of nuclear tests, in the presence of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan during his upcoming visit to the Central Asian region.

The Republic of Uzbekistan supports proposals made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the United Nations reforms. This is necessary for an appropriate adaptation of this Organisation to the dynamic changes in the international arena. Uzbekistan is one of those States that considers the United Nations Security Council reforms to be part of the evolution of the entire United Nations system.

The current structure of the Security Council reflects the realities of a past era. The world has changed since then. We believe that Japan and Germany have a legitimate right to permanent membership in the Security Council. All necessary grounds for this are present.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that it has been ten years since Uzbekistan became a United Nations Member, and it is very gratifying to see the United Nations family expanding. We congratulate Switzerland and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on their decision to become fully-fledged parties to the multilateral cooperation and dialogue of the United Nations. It should mean that the idea of peace and noble principles of the global security system are the order of the day.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. André Bumaya.

Mr. Bumaya (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf to congratulate you wholeheartedly on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly. As testimony to the esteem enjoyed by you and your country, Sir, you may rest assured of the support of the Rwanda delegation in carrying out your tasks.

I should like to take this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor for the effective way in which he guided our work during the fifty-sixth session.

I should also like, on behalf of my Government, to express my gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to ensure the effective and transparent functioning of the United Nations and to promote world peace.

The Government of Rwanda warmly welcomes the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations. We are already familiar with their contribution to the enhancement of the role of our great United Nations family, especially their respect for the principles of equal rights and the right of peoples to self-determination.

In this connection, the Government of Rwanda appeals for appropriate measures to be taken to ensure a fair and lasting settlement of the conflict in Western Sahara, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Organization. Furthermore, the Government of Rwanda reiterates its hope that peace will be achieved in the Middle East — a peace that guarantees the creation of a secure Palestinian State with recognized boundaries, coexisting peacefully with the State of Israel, whose security should also be guaranteed.

I should like to recall that, with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the ideological war often referred to as the cold war, the world entered a new era, with a new economic order. Despite the existence of hotbeds of violence in a number of areas on all continents, we welcome and encourage initiatives designed to resolve the tensions created during the cold war. In that connection, the Rwandan Government encourages talks between North and South Korea. We hope that the two parties will move forward towards the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. The Rwandan Government also supports the principle of one China. The question of Taiwan is an internal matter for China and can be effectively resolved out of the context of the ideological war that gave rise to it, in accordance with the principle, already accepted by the Chinese themselves, of one country and two systems.

This session of the General Assembly is being held one year after the terrible events of 11 September 2001. The terrorist attack perpetrated against the United States remains deeply etched in the memory of the people of Rwanda, and I would like to reiterate our solidarity with the American people. I do so with good reason: perhaps I should recall that, since 1994, Rwanda has been living under the perpetual threat of terrorist groups based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the most active of which is known as the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda (ALIR), an organization made up of elements of the former Rwandan Army (ex-FAR) forces and Interahamwe militias that were responsible for the 1994 genocide. The leaders of ALIR were among those who planned and carried out the genocide in Rwanda. Since 1994 such elements have attacked Rwanda on many occasions, carrying out the targeted killing of innocent people and destroying social and economic infrastructure of national and international significance. It was such elements that savagely massacred American, British and New Zealand tourists in the Bwindi park in March 1999.

Mr. Mamba (Swaziland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Now, in an attempt to mislead international public opinion and escape justice, the members of this terrorist group are endeavouring to organize themselves into political groups using a number of different labels. The Government of Rwanda therefore appeals to the United Nations and its Member States to take the necessary measures to track down and arrest all those responsible for the Rwanda genocide who are now members of ALIR and to bring them to international justice. We also appeal to the United Nations and its Member States to formally condemn those countries that finance, harbour or lend moral, material or logistical support to the ALIR terrorist organization.

With regard to the prosecution of those accused of the Rwandan genocide, I reiterate the appeal of the Rwandan Government to the international community to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda so that it can truly fulfil the expectations of the people of Rwanda and all justice-loving people. In this connection, special attention should be paid to the recommendations on this subject submitted by my Government to the Security Council. Furthermore, the time has come for the international community to ensure the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the report on the Rwanda genocide that was drafted under United Nations auspices, known as the Carlsson report.

With regard to the destabilizing effects of the terrorist activities of ALIR, I should like to advocate as a remedy that support be given to the Lusaka and Pretoria Agreements, which are designed to restore peace in the Great Lakes region. Those two Agreements provide for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of what are known as the negative forces that are operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which include ex-FAR forces and Interahamwe. The Rwandan Government appeals as a matter of urgency to the United Nations and its Member States to spare no effort in strongly supporting the implementation of those Agreements.

As for Rwanda, it has done its utmost to implement those Agreements and to work to re-establish a genuine and lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. In accordance with the statement made by Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, on 13 September during a meeting of the Security Council on the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that, on 17 September, my Government began to withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in conformity with the provisions of the Pretoria Accord.

My Government is convinced that the implementation of those Agreements will lead us not only to the restoration of security and stability in our subregion, but also to the establishment of a climate of confidence and good cooperative relations that will facilitate common actions in our struggle against the terrorist activities orchestrated by ALIR or by any other terrorist organization.

In this connection, I would like reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Rwanda to cooperate fully to achieve the success of any initiative designed to prevent and repress terrorism in all its forms. In this connection, and in implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), our Government has now ratified all the various international instruments to combat terrorism that we had not signed or ratified previously, in addition to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention on

the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which we had already ratified. Rwanda has just submitted its first report to the Security Council Committee established to follow up the implementation of that resolution. Rwanda is resolutely determined to combat terrorism, source of desolation and instability for the international community. We believe that the international community should mobilize all of its means to fight and to put an end to poverty, which affects so much of our population. It should do more for the eradication of injustice and inequality in order to ensure a better world for future generations. Thus, we call for the strengthening of the United Nations and the entire United Nations system to ensure the implementation of all of the international commitments to help poor countries. Commitments, such as those expressed in the Millennium Declaration, in the Monterrey Consensus and at the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development, should be reflected in concrete actions without delay. Third-world countries, especially countries of Africa, set great store by this.

In Africa, we would like to root out the causes of poverty. We have already grasped the different aspects of the situation and decided upon a framework to guide us in this long struggle against poverty, namely the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Within NEPAD, we have pledged to put an end to fratricidal wars that devastate our already moribund economies. We have pledged also to work towards democracy, good governance, and for letting the rule of law prevail.

The international community is hereby called upon to assist us in this process. We ask each of the rich countries to reexamine its positions regarding the terms that are often linked to various interventions aimed at helping poor countries, particularly as regards the debt and official development assistance (ODA). This needs to be done in order to enable these countries to confront effectively the various scourges that threaten them, including famine, pandemic diseases, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and so forth, so that they can eventually catch up with the rich countries. Hence, globalization will become profitable for the whole of mankind.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Central African Republic, Mr. Agba Otikpo Mezode.

Mr. Mezode (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is being held one year after the terrible terrorist attack of 11 September 2001. The delegation of the Central African Republic still intimately feels the strong emotion caused by that attack against liberty and democracy.

The President of the Republic, the head of State, His Excellency Ange-Félix Patassé, leading the delegation of the Central African Republic to the commemoration, wanted to reiterate his friendly sympathy towards the American Government and people, and to reassert the firm determination of his country to do everything that is necessary in order to contribute effectively to the legitimate international crusade against all forms of terrorism. Our work is starting within a particular context in the history of international relations, because never has humanity been so conscious of the need to confirm its cohesion in order to ensure a world of concord, solidarity and peace.

Before expanding on those facts, Mr. President, I would like to express to Mr. Jan Kavan and the members of the Bureau our warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of this session. His rich experience, as a great statesman and diplomat, will ensure the success of our work. That work will benefit from the full cooperation of the delegation of the Central African Republic. I take this opportunity also to express our admiration for his eminent predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the skill and competence with which he carried out his responsibilities.

The determination with which the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, is working, under all circumstances, to make the principles and ideals of the United Nations prevail, once more elicits our admiration. The President of the Republic, the people and the Government of the Central African Republic, want hereby to assure you of their support and reiterate their deep gratitude for all the objective reports on the situation in the Central African Republic.

Moreover, the entry of the Swiss Confederation to the United Nations, and soon the entry of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, are evidence of the resolute march of our Organization towards universality. The Central African Republic wishes to welcome Switzerland and hopes to cooperate closely

with that country within the framework of the United Nations.

Two years ago, 189 Member States met in this very hall. They set objectives for development for the Millennium, such as the reduction of extreme poverty, education for all, promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health, fight against HIV/AIDS and other diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, preservation of a sustainable environment and the establishment of a world partnership for development. All States unanimously pledged, through multilateral cooperation, to implement what is called the Millennium Declaration in order to achieve those objectives within 15 years.

The findings we made at the Millennium Summit on the state of the world at that time showed serious shortcomings with regard to our will to fulfil collectively the ideals bequeathed to us by the founding fathers of our Organization. However, through that same will, we undertook, in the Millennium Declaration, to re-examine these issues so as to set a course for the world that corresponds to the aspirations and expectations of the people.

However, this is far from what has happened. The revolution in information and communications, the progress of science and technology, the liberalization of trade and the disappearance of State frontiers, while accentuating the phenomenon of globalization, have at the same time led the world into an uncertain and unforeseeable future, to the point where the world today is threatened in the short term with imbalance.

States should fully explore all the potential offered by multilateral cooperation within the framework of the United Nations, particularly to put a stop to such threats. These threats, according to our delegation, are essentially of four kinds.

The first of these, as you can expect, is the threat that changed the world in one hour. It is called terrorism. This diffuse form of organized trans-border crime that foils armies, however powerful they may be, cannot be tolerated. The reaction of the international community to this new form of aggression must be sustained by adhering to resolutions firmly condemning such actions, and by observing a certain attitude towards the countries and institutions that tolerate their authors. Thus, all together, through solidarity and multilateral cooperation, we shall conquer terrorism, whether committed by a State or a small group.

The destruction of the environment, which threatens our future, is also a real threat. We should strive for the sustainable preservation of forests, fauna and biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations. This subject was eloquently analysed at the Summit on Sustainable Development, held recently in Johannesburg. My delegation has no doubt that international solidarity can here too be of help to safeguard nature. We should like on this occasion to express our gratitude for the American initiative, supported by the international community, for the protection of the Congo basin, of which the Central African Republic is a member.

There is one threat, which does not need to be named because it is so obvious, and that is poverty, which — far from declining — has grown over the years. The Declaration talks about reducing poverty, but must we not first stop manufacturing it? Famine, endemic disease, HIV/AIDS and malaria are the daily lot of the two thirds of humankind living on barely $1 a day. How can we fail to be moved by this? That fringe of humanity calls merely for the solidarity that will allow it to live in conditions worthy of our civilization.

In the face of the drying up of official development assistance, and with respect to the failure of certain development initiatives, the African countries have felt that we need to develop some sort of partnership with the countries of the North. They have therefore proposed an original plan for the development of Africa through the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The delegation of the Central African Republic fervently calls for the worldwide support of the international community for the implementation of the plan.

The many challenges defined at the Millennium Summit in terms of goals to be attained, along with the new plan for African development, will have no chance of success unless they are fostered in an environment of peace, security and stability. However, current conditions do not give much cause for optimism, although we note the occasional positive movement towards the settlement of a few conflicts. Regional crises remain, however, that are no less threatening to peace.

Faithful to its doctrine, the Central African Republic believes that the situation in the Middle East

can be settled only through the strict implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations on this subject. It deplores the escalation of violence in that region.

In the context of its own regional and subregional sphere, the Central African Republic highly appreciates the latest developments in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the signing of the Pretoria peace agreement with Rwanda and the disengagement agreement signed with Uganda.

In conclusion, I am compelled to note that my country, the Central African Republic, is the victim of international ostracism and of indifference that borders on contempt. How else is one to understand the silence of the international community and the international financial institutions in the face of calls for intervention and of Security Council resolutions following on the reports of the Secretary-General since the notorious date of 20 May 2000, and despite the appeals of the Organization of African Unity — now the African Union — the Community of Sahel-Saharan States and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community? And yet, our country has come a very long way with respect to good governance — that fetishistic word! — in politics, economics and finance. As of early 2002, the reduction of corruption is no longer a figment of the imagination, as evinced by the action undertaken in our financial offices.

My country's situation requires me to call attention to the words of the Algerian writer Kateb Yassin:

> "Our blood must become enflamed and we must catch fire in order to move the spectators. May the world open its eyes not to our mortal remains, but to the wounds of the survivors."

The sustainable development we all dream of will become a reality only if, here and now, we inject solidarity into international relations.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Mr. Fawzi Bin Abdul Majeed Shobokshi.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to deliver the statement of the Government of Saudi Arabia on behalf of His Royal Highness the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

It gives me great pleasure at the outset of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly to convey to Mr. Kavan personally and to his friendly country, the Czech Republic, our sincerest congratulations on his election to the important position of President of the Assembly. We are confident that he will preside with great skill and efficiency over our deliberations.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, who presided over the last session with wisdom and experience and deserves our gratitude and appreciation. I also wish to take this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to achieve peace and consolidate security throughout the world and for his persistent efforts to strengthen the Organization's role and enhance its efficiency.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes that the recent admission of Switzerland to membership of this Organization will enrich the United Nations and undoubtedly enhance its role, given that country's remarkable contributions to and experience in international cooperation.

Our current session coincides with the first anniversary of the horrendous disaster that befell the United States of America as a result of a most despicable act of terrorism that led to the death of thousands of innocent lives, with enormous material losses and immeasurable harm from which we are all still suffering. The pain and suffering of the American people over the loss of their relatives and loved ones as a result of this cowardly act was our loss, too, as we witnessed those events in a state of total shock and dismay. We felt nothing but absolute condemnation for those who committed that utterly criminal and barbaric act.

I therefore convey our sincerest condolences and heartfelt sympathies to the President of the United States, to the families of the victims and to the American people. I assure them that this horrible experience can only strengthen what we already know about the inner strength and pride of the American people. Those feelings of fortitude and resolve, as well as their determination to confront this challenge and to move on with resolve, guided by the principles and values of the founding fathers of their great nation, were unmistakable when we, along with the American

people and President, commemorated the first anniversary of the tragedy.

It was most overwhelmingly painful for us to see a number of our young people, who were in a position to contribute beneficially to the development and well-being of their own country, fall victim to those who led them astray as they embarked on a road that ended tragically. Those young men committed a grave offense against their country and their religion, which totally and utterly forbids the crime they committed.

May I be permitted here to quote from the letter sent to United States President George W. Bush by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Abdullah, in describing those young men in a most unambiguous and meaningful manner:

> "We in Saudi Arabia felt especially acute pain at the realization that a number of young Saudi citizens had been enticed and deluded and their reasoning subverted to the degree of denying the tolerance that their religion embraced and turning their backs on their homeland, which has always stood for understanding and moderation. They allowed themselves to be used as a tool to do great damage to Islam, a religion they espoused, and to all Muslims.
>
> "I would like to make it very clear that real Muslims throughout the world will never allow a minority of defiant extremists to speak in the name of Islam and distort its spirit of tolerance.
>
> "Your friends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia denounced and condemned the attacks of 11 September as strongly as the American people did. Like them, we are convinced that nothing can ever justify the shedding of innocent blood or the taking of lives and the terrorizing of people, regardless of cause or motive. Therefore, we do not simply reiterate our sincere condolences to the victims' relatives; we also assure all of our continued will and determination to do all we can to combat that malignant evil and uproot it from our world. My country will maintain its firm resolve to combat terrorism unilaterally and jointly with the international coalition. We shall pursue the war against terrorism relentlessly. Our drive emanates from our firm conviction that terrorism is a pernicious disease that poses a lethal threat to every human society and every effort must be made to confront and defeat it."

Saudi Arabia's position regarding terrorism has always been very clear, dispassionate and responsible. That is logical since our country was honoured by God to be the custodian of the Muslims' holiest sites, and it is also the birthplace of the heavenly message of Islam. Thus, we want to uphold the principles and teachings of the Islamic faith.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reaffirms its total support for all Security Council resolutions related to the question of terrorism. It has been cooperating fully with the international community in implementing those resolutions, with the aim of combating terrorism. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has taken the necessary steps to close any gaps in regulations related to charitable fundraising that might be exploited for illegal purposes.

The competent authorities in Saudi Arabia have put in place all the necessary measures to implement Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). Moreover, the Government of Saudi Arabia has lent its support to every international effort, within the framework of the Security Council, to crack down on terrorism by all means approved by the international community.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which has itself suffered from terrorist acts, has enacted regulations that mete out punishment to the perpetrators of terrorist acts. Moreover, it has made the fight against terrorism part of its basic school curricula.

At the regional level, Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries to sign the Pan-Arab Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, adopted by the League of Arab States in 1998, and it is also a signatory to the Convention of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on Combating International Terrorism.

At the international level, Saudi Arabia is a party to 10 conventions and agreements that deal with various forms of terrorism. We sincerely look to the United Nations, which represents all countries of the world, to make the international effort to combat terrorism a truly global one, without bias or discrimination, with the primary goal of serving all members of the international community and protecting them from the evils of terrorism, including State-supported terrorism.

Confronting terrorism, international cooperation in tracking down terrorist organizations and the exploration of all ways and means to eradicate it

represent important steps towards eliminating that dangerous phenomenon. However, the international effort against terrorism, regardless of its effectiveness, will not be capable of totally eradicating that phenomenon unless it addresses its underlying causes, including political, economic and social circumstances that become ground for extremism, violence and terrorism.

The decision to eradicate terrorism has been taken, without hesitation or vacillation. However, if our true objective is to eradicate the possibility of its recurrence, then attention must be paid to the political, economic and social conditions that, in many instances, create grounds for extremism, especially when those conditions reach serious proportions and the possibility for peaceful change and development does not exist.

For example, the deteriorating conditions of oppressed people, whether they suffer injustice and oppression or are subject to foreign occupation, and the international community's inability, for one reason or another, to find just solutions to those problems will ultimately lead to a situation in which opportunity is created for people with evil intentions to take advantage of naïve young men who are led to believe that violence and terrorism are the only and ideal means for correcting the injustice that afflict them.

Thirty-five years have passed since the Palestinian people came under the suffocating Israeli occupation. The cycle of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories will never end unless the legitimate rights of the Palestinians are respected. Those rights have been acknowledged by the international community as a whole and are enshrined in many United Nations resolutions and have become legally binding through various international agreements signed by consecutive Israeli Governments with the Palestinian side.

The obligations contained in those agreements have been completely ignored by the Israelis, whether they relate to the continuation of the occupation or the treatment of the Palestinian people and their legitimate leadership.

The policy of siege, starvation, military incursions, the destruction of property and the desecration of holy places totally contravenes not only signed agreements, but also international law and humanitarian norms.

Furthermore, the Government of Ariel Sharon is marginalizing the Palestinian Authority, established under the Oslo Accords, isolating the Palestinian territories and destroying their infrastructure. In addition, with nothing left to destroy, recently Sharon has implemented a policy not only of imprisoning, but also of assassinating, members of the Palestinian leadership. He recently and blatantly declared that Israel is no longer bound by any agreement signed with the Palestinians, including the Oslo Accords.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories will undoubtedly lead to a humanitarian disaster resulting from the economic siege, the unchecked spread of disease and the virtual collapse of public health and security forces.

The most important fact to be recalled by all, particularly the Israeli people, is that the goal of security promised by the current Israeli Government will never materialize. That is due directly to the policies and practices of that Government, which chose to ignore dialogue and negotiations and opted for oppression and violence as a means of resolving the Palestinian problem.

President Bush's statement to the Assembly concerning the difficulty of attaining peace between the Palestinians and Israelis, without providing the freedom necessary for both, conforms with the current situation in the occupied territories, which continue to face a cycle of violence and suffering because one side, namely the Palestinians, has been denied its right to freedom and independence.

Therefore, the exit point of that dilemma is Israel's acknowledgement of the importance of the existence of a Palestinian State established on a basis of constitutional legality and capable of conducting negotiations and resolving pending problems that cannot be ignored or bypassed. That is the action that must be taken if we truly intend to put an end to the crisis in the occupied territories, the price of which is being paid by both Palestinians and Israelis.

We believe that an independent Palestinian State, based on a constitution binding on all Palestinians, and specifying the basis and rules governing their relations with Israel, will ultimately constitute a guarantee not only for the Palestinians, but also for the Israelis themselves, because the Israeli side will have the assurance of dealing with a legitimate entity with clear characteristics, structures and institutions. Their future

relations will determine their responsibilities. To achieve this goal, the international community must move to end the humanitarian catastrophe and suffering faced by the Palestinian people.

There is also a dire need to halt the violence raging in the area through a practical and dispassionate treatment of the security situation. That clearly means that the international community must hold the Israeli Government accountable to the same level of security obligations that is required of the Palestinian Authority. To limit the security obligations to the Palestinian side alone is neither practical nor a means of solving the problem. It is incumbent on all of us to work together to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinians and to take the necessary practical steps to put the Palestinian problem on the path to the desired settlement.

As far as the comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, we see in the Arab peace initiative adopted at the Beirut Arab Summit a historic move that contains all the requirements for a just and permanent peace in the Middle East based on resolutions of international legitimacy and supported by all Arab States. It would lead to Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and to normalization of Arab relations with Israel.

There is another problem that has reached crisis proportions and has become a source of grave danger to the security and stability of the Middle East: the issue of Iraq and its implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. President Bush mentioned in his speech before the General Assembly the need to refer this matter to the Security Council in order to have the appropriate resolutions adopted. That represents a new and positive approach that we view with satisfaction. Without a doubt, that step has led to a new climate, resulting in the decision of the Iraqi Government to allow the unconditional return of United Nations weapons inspectors. That development, which will avert confrontation through diplomatic means, shows that a positive step will, in most cases, lead to a reciprocal positive step. At this point, it is appropriate to express our satisfaction with the Iraqi Government's prompt response to the call of the ministerial committee of the League of Arab States, which met in parallel with the General Assembly. We believe that it is now the Security Council's responsibility to undertake serious efforts to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly people of Iraq. We also believe that it is now the responsibility of Iraq to promptly carry out its pledges to allow the return of the United Nations weapon inspection teams without prior conditions.

The world has suffered great destruction and human misery during the last century, which was characterized by bloody confrontations, hate, conflicts and violence. In a world of intertwined dependencies and common interests, the peace and stability of humankind depend largely upon the international community's determination to forsake wars, renounce violence, combat terrorism and settle disputes by peaceful means and through the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue, as well as by consolidating international cooperation, tolerance and understanding.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls for the establishment of an international humanitarian order based on a new form of partnership between the developed and developing countries, on a solid basis of cooperation, solidarity and international economic relations built on justice, equality, mutual benefits and joint responsibilities.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia looks forward to a twenty-first century governed by the rule of law and not by brutal force, a century of true pluralism in which everyone will participate in managing the affairs of the present and in creating the future, instead of excluding and ignoring others. We look forward to a year in which the moral values that govern human behaviour will prevail and in which the banners of justice, mercy and interaction among peoples will be raised in order to achieve security, stability and peace for all humanity.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. María Eugenia Brizuela de Ávila, Minister for Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

Mrs. Brizuela de Ávila (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to express, on behalf of the people and the Government of El Salvador, our most sincere congratulations to the President on being elected to conduct the work of this session of the General Assembly.

Likewise, we would like to express our recognition to Mr. Han Seung-soo for the successful work he carried out during the past session. We commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his work and attention in the prevention and solution of conflicts, and we encourage him to continue moving forward in the reform process of the United Nations.

We welcome to this important world forum the Swiss Confederation and, soon, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in their new capacity of Member States. In this context, we reiterate our request to review the special international situation of the Republic of China on Taiwan, whose 23 million inhabitants are being denied the right to representation in this forum. We nurture the hope that in the near future the participation in this world Organization of all the nations of the world without exclusion — as is currently the case with Taiwan — will become a reality.

The Government of El Salvador is convinced that it is necessary to examine new and visionary initiatives to remove existing obstacles in the discussions on the composition and role of the Security Council in the new millennium. That is necessary and essential in order for the United Nations to continue to be the principal world forum of collective action in the face of challenges to international peace and security.

This year, my country commemorated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the peace accords, which put an end to armed conflict and paved the way for a new reality of hope, peace, democracy and development. Our democratic process has progressively been consolidated and is advancing with normality within the same dynamic of open debates and deliberations that characterize all democracies. This has been a result of the firm desire of all Salvadorians to construct a free and democratic society, which we, the Member States, should feel proud of and part of, through the successful role played by the United Nations.

In the economic and social fields, we have achieved significant progress in strengthening peace and democracy. The Government of President Francisco Flores Pérez has strongly promoted an economic model featuring economic rights as a means to advance towards development and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the opportunities of globalization. We have also favoured human development, investing primarily in education, health, housing and basic services, as those areas are indispensable elements contributing to social well-being, to the improvement in the quality of life of our people and to development.

Ten years after the signing of the peace accords, El Salvador has successfully culminated its peace process and is now enjoying the dividends of peace. Therefore, we are grateful for the valuable support of the international community and of the United Nations. We are particularly grateful to the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for the peace process of El Salvador — Colombia, Mexico, Spain, Venezuela and the United States of America — for the support they offered during the unfolding of that process, whose successful outcome continues to assist efforts for conflict resolution throughout the world.

With regard to Central America, I wish to reaffirm El Salvador's spirit of integration, which leads us to attach high priority to our relations with neighbouring countries in seeking common development for the region and in strengthening the Central American integration process in its political, economic and social facets. We do so because it is only through a stable and united region that we will be able to complement one another in order to strengthen our position in the world economic environment and jointly face the challenges of globalization. Only through integration will we be able to overcome our narrow territorial limitations to effectively respond to the just demands of our citizens in the areas of education, health and opportunities for the future. Being united and open to the world as a region will be the only way we will be able to cease to appear small in the face of the great challenge of creating, with all the requisite speed, more and better jobs so that all our peoples will be able to forge for themselves a worthy future in their own homelands.

It is in that context that the Presidents of Central America have agreed on an economic integration plan of action effective immediately. That plan includes the formation of a customs union by next year. Likewise, among other things, we will continue to work on adopting common duty tariffs and facilitating trade and the free movement of all products. With that goal in mind, and having already attained positive results with the Central American agreements now in effect with Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Chile and Panama, we are also jointly negotiating free trade agreements with Canada and United States. We are also working to strengthen and implement the Puebla-Panama Plan by implementing eight large meso-American integration projects. Through the Puebla-Panama Plan we intend to take advantage of the potential of Central America and of the southern and south-eastern regions of Mexico as

a natural corridor linking North and South America and joining two oceans.

We have responsibly assumed the historical challenge to address through relevant bodies the border disagreements inherited by the current generation of Central Americans. El Salvador has done its share in this regard. We are convinced that strict compliance with international law provides the foundation for harmony among neighbouring countries. We have therefore recently reached an agreement at the presidential level with the Republic of Honduras to accelerate the demarcation of our territorial borders. Furthermore, we have also recently resorted to the International Court of Justice to exercise our right to request a revision of its 1992 judgement, but only with regard to one of the six areas in dispute in the case that we jointly submitted in 1986. Through these efforts, El Salvador and Central America are clearing the way in order to make unencumbered progress towards the realization of our common integration projects. In the end, our goal is for the borders that we are now defining through law to be erased in practice by harmony, mutual respect and the development of our peoples.

In the international sphere — having just commemorated the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the United States — the Government of El Salvador would like to reiterate its firm commitment to the worldwide struggle against terrorism and all related criminal activities. We view this global effort as a joint and individual endeavour of Member States. Consequently, we see it as an effort linked to the deepest respect for the principles established in the Charter of the United Nations, in international law and in international humanitarian law. In that connection, the Government of El Salvador would like to express its gratitude for the efforts being made by the Counter-Terrorism Committee established by Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). We also reiterate our complete readiness to cooperate in the unequivocal implementation of that resolution. In addition, we would like to inform the international community that El Salvador will host the third session of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism. That meeting will be held in San Salvador during the first half of 2003. We hope the meeting will adopt relevant decisions to further strengthen the hemispheric fight against this scourge.

El Salvador recognizes the progress achieved with the entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. In this regard, my Government is carrying out the necessary reviews to bring our constitutional rules in line with those of the Statute, so as to enable us to initiate the process of joining the Court.

In the same vein, I am also pleased to inform the Assembly that last week El Salvador ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General stated that the world in which we live today is divided between rich and poor as never before in human history. That report also pointed out the harsh reality experienced by one sixth of all human kind, which daily fights to survive in a life and death struggle with sickness, hunger and natural and human disasters. Meanwhile, another sixth of mankind has attained levels of well-being that would have been unimaginable just a few decades ago. Between both extremes there are the 4 billion inhabitants of developing countries who, although we may no longer be living on the verge of disaster, are very far from achieving the security, capacity and material well-being enjoyed by the developed world.

As a developing country, El Salvador is following the course charted at Monterrey. We hope that the offers of funding made by various countries at the Conference will become a reality. We are also actively participating in the preparatory work for the World Summit on the Information Society, as we are convinced of the potential benefits that connectivity and knowledge will bring to the future development of free societies.

In that sense, El Salvador shares the vision that international cooperation with medium-income countries must not be exclusively limited to technical cooperation. That cooperation should also include financial cooperation, as the fight against poverty should not be confined by borders or limited by statistics pertaining to national averages. Such figures are far from being a true reflection of existing realities in different places. Our renewed democracies need to

be consolidated, strengthened and made sustainable in a way that gives everyone access to a better quality of life.

Another of the major challenges we face, namely, natural disasters, could nullify the efforts we have made throughout the years. The devastating effects of such phenomena are no longer limited solely to traditionally vulnerable regions. As was the case recently in many European countries, other regions that previously had not been very much affected by natural disasters are now experiencing them. In this connection, the people and the Government of El Salvador would like to reiterate their complete solidarity with the Governments of affected countries and with the families that have suffered as a result of the devastating floods in Europe.

The Government of El Salvador calls on the international community to jointly implement the agreements reached in the five basic areas taken up by the World Summit on Sustainable Development that took place recently in Johannesburg, South Africa. Those included water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biological diversity. All of them are of crucial importance to the future of the environment, particularly in developing countries.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating the firm commitment and political will of the Government of El Salvador to contribute actively to the search for collective and individual solutions to the problems that we will take up during this session of the General Assembly. We also wish to reiterate our confidence in the work that the Secretary-General is doing on behalf of the nations that make up our Organization and on the basis of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter. Along with the strengthening of multilateralism, those purposes and principles remain entirely valid in the new millennium.

The Acting President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I wish to exercise my right of reply to the statement about the Armenian genocide made yesterday in this Hall by the representative of Turkey in his exercise of the right to reply to the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, in his address during the general debate of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, said the following:

> "We extend our profound appreciation to all those Governments, legislatures and international bodies that have recognized the Armenian genocide and pledge our cooperation to all those that are currently in the process of reaffirming the facts of that crime against humanity. As a signatory to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Armenian Government places a high priority on the struggle to prevent future genocide and to stand up against all attempts to deny past genocide." (*see A/57/PV.9*)

Indeed, I should like to thank the representative of Turkey for understanding the message correctly and for once again bringing the issue of the Armenian genocide to the attention of this body.

In that regard, allow me to make a few comments. The twentieth century began for Armenians with the tragedy of genocide and mass deportations in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and 1923, which served the deliberate, premeditated ultranationalist objective of wiping out the Armenian community in Ottoman Turkey. The first genocide of the twentieth century unfolded in full force and continued until it had consumed the lives of 1.5 million Armenians.

The Armenian genocide is an undeniable and incontrovertible fact, and that is absolutely clear not only to us, but to a large number of countries that have officially recognized and condemned the crime of genocide committed against the Armenian people. Yet Turkey spares no effort to deny this shameful event of its past. There is nothing new about the accusations, falsifications and inventions that the Turkish Government is presenting in its futile attempts to deny or to justify what international law defines as genocide.

The representative of Turkey made a reference to "unsubstantiated evidence" of the Armenian genocide. The genocide is not something that needs to be proved. Historians and scholars have done their job, and

extensive and well-documented evidence of the Armenian genocide is available in many Turkish, Russian, British and American archives. It is regrettable that Turkey has preferred deliberate and willful ignorance to a sober and impartial approach.

The Armenian genocide showed that such an inhuman crime could be committed. The impunity of the genocide policy of the Ottoman Empire brought new brutalities. The most striking evidence is Hitler 's rhetorical flourish about his plans to invade Poland in 1939: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" Those words can be read in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

I should like to particularly stress one more point, which is of special relevance to the United Nations. In 1948, the Organization adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Mr. Raphael Lemkin, author of the term "genocide" and one of the authors of the Convention, emphasized the international community's need for such a Convention by speaking of the necessity "to prevent from happening again what happened to Armenians during World War I and to Jews during World War II". Regrettably, Turkey, one of the parties to the Convention, does not want to acknowledge that denial is a continuation of genocide or, as some note, it is the final act of genocide.

Turkey's continuing denial of the genocide of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire has only intensified our aspirations to historical justice. Turkey's pointless diversions, accusations and distortions have no bearing on the Armenian genocide, on its international recognition or on its scholarly examination. They do, however, make a point about the evil of genocide and of its denial. Instead of condemning the criminal Committee of Union and Progress, in charge of the Ottoman Government during the First World War, Turkey embraces them today. Instead of distancing itself from the murderous policy of genocide, Turkey tirelessly seeks to justify it. That is a destructive policy that in no way, shape or form can be construed as a step towards healing, reconciling, understanding or improving the relations between Turkey and Armenia. There is a better way of dealing with the painful past: namely, coming to grips with the truth of the matter.

As President Kocharian said in this Hall two years ago in his address before the Millennium Summit: "Penitence is not humiliation; rather, it elevates individuals and nations" (*A/55/PV.6, p. 11*). In its resolution of 1987, the European Parliament referred to the fact that the recognition of the Armenian genocide must be viewed as a profoundly humane act of moral rehabilitation towards the Armenians, which can only bring honour to the Turkish Government. Indeed, many nations have found their spiritual and moral resurrection in the surge of validations of the truth — in facing their own past squarely.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Turkey to exercise the second right of reply, which will be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Cengizer (Turkey): I do not wish to indulge myself in a prolonged debate, as I see that it is futile indeed to expect my Armenian colleague to question at least some aspects of his arguments. I would say only this. As is very well known, at the end of the First World War, the Armenians, reminding the victorious Powers that they had also fought as belligerents while they were Ottoman subjects, wanted to be represented at the Paris and Sèvres Conferences. Here, I would like to quote the Armenian leader Mr. Ali Aharonian himself, speaking at the Paris Peace Conference, from *Papers Related to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference 1919*, printed by the Government Printing Office in Washington:

> "At the beginning of the war, our nation not only forgot all grievances against Tsarist rule and rallied whole-heartedly to the Russian flag in support of the Allied cause, but our fellow countrymen in Turkey and all over the world offered to the Government of the Czar (the archives of the Russian Embassy in Paris prove this) to establish and support Armenian legions at their own expense to fight side by side with Russian troops under the command of Russian generals."

Indeed, in the words of an eminent scholar, whom some of our Armenian friends do not like to have quoted, Professor Bernard Lewis,

> "What happened to the Armenians was the result of a massive Armenian armed rebellion ... which began even before war broke out and continued on a larger scale. Great numbers of Armenians ... joined the Russian forces invading Turkey."

And elsewhere he stated:

> "The Armenians want to benefit from both worlds. On the one hand, they speak with pride of their struggle against Ottoman despotism, while on the other hand, they compare their tragedy with the Jewish genocide."

Lastly, with regard to the process of achieving international recognition, I would like to quote the spokesperson for the British Foreign Office, Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, speaking on 14 April 1999:

> "The British Government had condemned the massacres at the time. But in the absence of unequivocal evidence that the Ottoman Administration took a specific decision to eliminate the Armenians under their control at that time, British Governments have not recognized those events as indications of genocide. Nor do we believe it is the business of Governments of today to review events of over 80 years ago, with a view to pronouncing on them."

I would like to end my statement by paying tribute to the memory of all those who perished — Turks, Armenians and others — who perished at that very tragic moment of our shared history.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Armenia to exercise the second right of reply, which will be limited to five minutes.

Mr. Abelian (Armenia): I apologize for taking the floor again. I would like to make just a few additional comments on the remarks of the representative of Turkey. First, I would like to remind the representative of Turkey that the Armenian genocide began with "Kristallnacht", the night of 24 April 1915, the first day of genocide, when more than three hundred Armenian intellectuals were brutally murdered by Turkish authorities, thus signaling the beginning of mass annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.

It is not my intention to go into archives in this General Assembly Hall. I would just like to quote one statement by the Ambassador of Germany, representing a Government allied with Turkey, who reported as early as in July 1915,

> "The manner in which the relocation is being carried out demonstrates the Government is really pursuing the aim of destroying the Armenian race in Turkey".

In July 1917, his successor reported,

> "The policy of extermination has largely been achieved. The current leaders of Turkey fully subscribe to this policy."

It is based on those and other facts that back in 1919 the Kemalist Court tried and convicted a number of high-ranking young Turkish officials for their role in what the Turkish Government then called the massacre and destruction of the Armenians.

The unfortunate habit of the Turkish Government to deny the Armenian genocide continues to manifest itself in an unending stream of falsifications. If Turkey today encounters difficulties in building normal relations with its neighbours, perhaps it is because it has such an inconsistent and untenable view of the past, of the historical record as understood by the rest of the world. This sadly contorted effort to argue that evidence of the Armenian genocide is questionable is but a reflection of the length to which Turkey is prepared to go in order to press upon the world its fictive denial of the truth.

For the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide it behooves them to engage in introspection, to face and learn from their history, to question how such violence could have occurred, to examine what was there that lead them down the road to genocide and to find some redemption through appropriate acts of contrition, beginning, but not ending, with knowledge and acceptance of the truth. If they are unable or unwilling to deal with the truth, and they still try to maintain their righteous self-image, then they may again find themselves on a path towards victimization of other groups.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/57/PV.18

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Friday, 20 September 2002, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jan Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Statement by the President on the occasion of the International Day of Peace

The President: Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I should like to recall that, by its resolution 55/282, the General Assembly decided that, with effect from the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the International Day of Peace shall be observed every year on 21 September. By the same resolution, the General Assembly declared the International Day of Peace to be a day of global ceasefire and non-violence and invited all nations and people to commemorate the day by honouring a 24-hour cessation of hostilities and through, inter alia, education and public awareness.

For the past two decades the United Nations has been commemorating the International Day of Peace. By adopting resolution 55/282, however, the General Assembly not only set a firm date for the observance of the International Day of Peace, but also provided a forum through which the International Day of Peace could have a global reach and a practical impact. I believe that the decision adopted at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly has thus strengthened the significance of the Day — a significance which should grow even greater in coming years.

Address by Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Noboa Bejarano (*spoke in Spanish*): Many of the heads of State that have preceded me at this rostrum have been eloquent in expressing their open condemnation of terrorism, their prescriptions for the eradication of extreme poverty, their vision for a new international order that will ensure peace and security in the world and their reservations about a globalization process that, if poorly understood, will in the end make the gap between rich and poor unbridgeable.

We want to stress above all the urgent need to take action and to begin to commit new and greater financial resources to development. We must strengthen our common bond and work together to try to find solutions to the problems that affect us all.

We, the poor countries, are asked to practise austerity and fiscal discipline, respect the rules of the free market and free trade and cooperate in the fight

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against the scourges that afflict humankind. When we try to obtain access to the major markets for our goods, however, the door is slammed shut. We are asked to be competitive, but when we take the fruits of our labour to the market, subsidies amounting to millions of dollars are placed in our way, making it impossible for us to even hope to compete.

We are asked to participate in the fight against drug trafficking, but we have not been given the resources promised us to enable us to carry out our action plans.

When we try to negotiate in a serious and creative way with international lending agencies, attempts are made to impose terms on us — terms that, if accepted, would dangerously weaken our young and sometimes fragile democracies.

People don't understand: our peoples, in their poverty, are quite perceptive, but they still cannot understand how they can benefit from a globalization process that may never knock at their doors.

We, the leaders of the developing countries, are severely criticized when, upon our return from summits and forums, we have only meagre results to show, and when the resolve to provide support and cooperation is weakened because of the actions of a few with respect to a consensus declaration.

I want to be very clear and simple in expressing my thoughts in this universal forum: hypocrisy, inequity, injustice, increased poverty and failure to take action, among other ills, are the main reasons for breaches of the peace. They create a framework in which violence, sectarian extremism and misunderstanding find fertile ground.

The developed world has found new and discriminatory methods — in financial, social and ethical terms — of categorizing our countries. Some are willing to perpetuate this perverse way of categorizing us on the basis of criteria laid down by those that have more than we do. We are criticized for a lack of transparency and for some alleged lack of respect for the law, while enormous losses are piling up owing to corruption. Could it be that the very foundations of the capital system have been seriously damaged by the scandals that have taken place in the wealthier and more powerful nations?

Our emigrants are discriminated against, and some forget how the most prosperous nations managed to create their identities through the mixing of races or by opening their arms to those yearning for progress and freedom. Developed countries demand the strengthening of our institutions and they get quite lyrical in their support for democratic processes, which often take forms that lead only to instability. We must break paradigms, and we must do it now. We must not persist in simplifying, relying on a purely economic vocabulary, all the benefits of a globalization process that is still not understood by all, nor assimilated in each of its components.

We speak of free flows of capitals, but these flows only take the form of transfers of investments in the Northern Hemisphere. We countries in the Southern Hemisphere have typically received these same capitals in the form of expensive loans, whose heavy burden it has been impossible to alleviate over time.

When the North looks to the South, it sees it with paternalistic and patronizing eyes. The widely publicized equity in the terms of exchange is only visible in statements, manuals and textbooks of developed countries. What we need is a new global ethic, one that repudiates terrorism but helps, with the same strength and resolve, give substance to our creative efforts to eradicate poverty, a poverty that threatens the most basic principles of human dignity.

When food is lacking, when there is no health or education, and when the survival instinct itself is limited, very little or nothing can be done to pursue values and ideals cherished by any developed society. My country condemns terrorism. My government supports every effort to eradicate it, but Ecuador also demands the creation of a new coalition and a new order to fight against poverty.

This is a new century, a century of solidarity and hope. But we must also make this century a century of respect on the part of all nations for the principles that govern international law. Yes, it is a new century, a century in which all activities that violate the sanctity of human life are condemned and prosecuted. There is no justification whatsoever for taking the lives of innocent persons. We must work with all forces available, together under the law, to fight this scourge.

This is also a century of changes of attitudes and of proposals, a time in which we must resolve definitively the problem of the debt of the poorest countries towards the developed countries. It must be a

time of opportunity to build a fairer world, a world of solidarity.

As a global citizen, I am concerned that the commitment to ensure the very existence of the planet is not shared equitably by all. Everything is demanded of those of us who have great diversity and renewable resources, but, in return, we are denied the financial tools to seek alternative resources for a development not entailing the destruction of our natural resources, as if this commitment to the environment should fall on our shoulders alone. We must fight to improve the quality of life on earth. But the beneficiaries of this struggle must be every man and woman on earth, and not only those with the good fortune to have been born in the North.

Ecuador, which I am honoured to represent in this Assembly, is a country committed to the most noble causes of the international community. No effort will be spared to enable our people to reach a human society in which men, women and children, without distinction, without exclusion, can develop fully and flourish.

Ecuador wants to be an ethical model that looks to the future. We wish to see the voice of reason heard in every global forum. We want to create a world of freedom, a more just and united society. We would like, from the centre of the two hemispheres, to be a bridge uniting North and South, two regions that should walk together towards development and not be separated by geographic conventions.

Thank you so much, distinguished delegates, for this extraordinary opportunity to address the world community. Thank you for your continuing efforts to make the United Nations the highest forum of international debate. My country and my Government view this body as the highest forum for debate and for the settlement of those problems that constantly affect humankind.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency, Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency, Mr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Kabbah (Sierra Leone): Two years ago I came to the rostrum of this Assembly with mixed feelings. On the one hand, my country had just witnessed an unprovoked attempt to derail the peace process. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was still recovering from a brazen affront to its military capability and the authority of the Security Council. On the other hand, I was optimistic, first of all because the people of Sierra Leone had once again demonstrated their resolve to maintain their struggle for peace. I was also optimistic because the Security Council had responded appropriately by giving UNAMSIL additional responsibilities within its mandate, and by increasing the troop level of the mission.

Today, I stand here with only one feeling, an overwhelming feeling of joy. At long last the rebel war in Sierra Leone is over. All combatants have been disarmed and demobilized. Reintegration is well under way. Over 55,000 ex-combatants are currently engaged in reintegration programme activities, ranging from formal education and vocational-skills training to small-scale trade, agriculture and community development. While the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration is concentrating on the integration of ex-combatants, another national agency, the National Commission for Social Action, is actively engaged in programmes that will benefit all categories of victims of the brutal war, particularly the most vulnerable population groups.

Most heartening of the recent positive developments was the affirmation four months ago by the people of Sierra Leone that they would never forgo their constitutional right to choose their leaders freely through the ballot box. They sent a resounding message to the entire world that, in Africa, it is still possible to hold free and fair elections.

Our objective was not merely to win the rebel war, but to defend the right of our people to live. We fought against a brutal attempt by a few who, with the

assistance of forces within and outside the subregion, were determined to assume power and gain unimpeded and perpetual access to our mineral resources. My primary objective as the democratically elected leader was for us to win the peace. Today, I am pleased to say here that the people of Sierra Leone are continuing to work assiduously to win the peace.

We share the view that there cannot be real peace in Sierra Leone without justice. The support that we have so far received for the establishment of a special court to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious breaches of international humanitarian law and the national laws of Sierra Leone should also be regarded as part of the peace dividend.

We are also convinced that we cannot speak about lasting peace in Sierra Leone without national reconciliation. Making the Truth and Reconciliation Commission fully operational after its inauguration in July 2002 has now become one of our major preoccupations. Let me add, however, that inadequate international support for the Commission could jeopardize pr spects for national reconciliation which, members will agree with me, is one of the prerequisites of lasting peace and justice.

The victory that the people of Sierra Leone have so far achieved in the peace process is theirs, but not theirs alone. It is also a victory for the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the entire international community. Indeed, it is a victory for humanity, for all those who cherish the dignity and worth of the human person. Therefore, let me take this opportunity, on behalf of every Sierra Leonean, to express our profound and sincere gratitude to the United Nations family, ECOWAS and its Monitoring Group, and other regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their support in our prolonged struggle. This was a partnership for peace and security that we will never forget.

With your permission, Sir, I am obliged once again to single out for commendation some special friendly States that played a crucial role in that effort. I refer to the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republics of Guinea, Ghana and Mali, and the United States of America and China, among others. We will always remember their place in the great partnership for peace and security that wrenched Sierra Leone from the verge of total destruction. This is what collective responsibility is all about in our interdependent world.

While we celebrate our mutual success, we should at the same time be aware of the challenges that we face not only in Sierra Leone, but also in the Mano River Union and the West African subregions. Our success notwithstanding, the situation in our part of the continent continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. That threat will remain and could increase if we fail to consolidate the gains that we have made in Sierra Leone. I should therefore like to reiterate my recent appeal to the United Nations and the international community as a whole to remain engaged in our national effort to consolidate our hard-won peace. I was encouraged that, following the May 2002 elections, the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council underscored the need to further consolidate what we have achieved so far.

The people of Sierra Leone and the international community have made considerable investment in material and human resources to bring us to the stage at which we find ourselves today. It would be a terrible mistake if, by sheer complacency and a failure to adopt the appropriate course of action, we should allow the country to slip back into armed conflict. We share the view of the Secretary-General, expressed in his latest report on UNAMSIL, that the Organization should ensure that the next phase of the Mission does not jeopardize the progress achieved so far in stabilizing peace in Sierra Leone.

Beyond Sierra Leone, there are ominous signs of spillover conflicts hovering around the subregion. It would also be tragic if we should underestimate the current threat to peace and go on procrastinating about ways of preventing a spillover.

How then do we go about ensuring, at least in the short run, that Sierra Leone will sustain its newly-won peace? How do we contain the current hostilities across the border with Liberia? The need to address these questions has become more urgent as we approach the end of the current mandate of UNAMSIL. While looking forward to the new phase of that important instrument of peace, I thought that I should draw the attention of the Security Council, through the Secretary-General, to some of the issues that could be taken into consideration and linked to an exit strategy for UNAMSIL.

Recently, I shared my thoughts on this and related matters in a letter which I addressed to the Secretary-General. The letter has since been circulated as Security Council document S/2002/975 of 29 August 2002. Permit me to highlight some of the issues raised in that communication. These are issues related to the capacity of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone police to perform their respective functions more effectively throughout the country; the challenges facing us in the integration of all ex-combatants; the risks following from the turbulent situation in neighbouring Liberia, and particularly its repercussions for peace and stability in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union as a whole; the danger of the apparent absence of a strategic plan of the international community to address the situation in Liberia, especially as the country approaches crucial elections next year; and finally, the delay in responding to the request for international assistance to ECOWAS in ensuring security on the borders shared by Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

We are pleased that the Secretary-General has taken these and other issues into account in preparing his recommendations to the Security Council for a measured and phased downsizing of UNAMSIL. This will ensure that we do not provoke any new sense of insecurity in a population that has been traumatized for too long. I am also confident that the Security Council will consider the recommendations carefully, especially in the light of my Government's and the Secretary-General's own assessment that the conflict in Liberia still constitutes the most serious threat to the stability that now prevails in Sierra Leone. Who will forget that the 10-year rebel war in Sierra Leone was launched from the territory of Liberia?

The current state of peace and security in Sierra Leone and the rest of the Mano River Union subregion is obviously a matter of constant concern to us. However, as a member of the global community, we are also seriously concerned about impediments to international cooperation for economic and social development; about threats to international peace and security, including the nuclear arms race and terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; and about the rights of such vulnerable population groups as children and people with disabilities. All those often require appropriate multilateral agreements or arrangements to ensure that they are effectively addressed.

Never since the end of the Second World War has multilateral cooperation become such a necessary means for resolving international disputes and for ensuring the well-being of people everywhere. Sierra Leone, therefore, attaches the utmost importance to the strengthening of multilateral cooperation, as reflected by such recent conferences as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Those provide effective platforms for articulating the interests of all States and for devising common strategies to address collectively problems that would otherwise overwhelm the capacities of individual countries or regions.

It is, therefore, self-evident that we must continue to pursue the multilateral approach to those and other international issues. The consequences of diminishing or bypassing the multilateral approach in matters that affect the lives of millions of people worldwide could, I should emphasize, be disastrous for us all.

Two years ago, in the Millennium Declaration, heads of State and Government, in the spirit of interdependence, made a commitment to work together in achieving specific goals in areas such as peace, security and disarmament, human rights, good governance and poverty eradication. Those goals are all underpinned by a strong belief in the principles of multilateral cooperation and shared interests.

Of special significance to us are the commitments made by the world leaders in the Millennium Declaration to meet the special needs of Africa. That is not only because Africa has the largest number of countries classified as least developed, and in which almost half the population lives in abject poverty. It is also because we have all benefited and stand to benefit from each other's resources.

In spite of its current level of overall development, Africa has a lot to offer to the rest of the world. Of course, we Africans realize our responsibility, first and foremost, to develop and implement strategies for improving the quality of life of our people and for strengthening our capacity to contribute more effectively to the economies of our partners in the developed world.

In effect, that is what the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is all about — partnership among African countries, partnership with the rest of the world and progress for all mankind. It is

in that context that the conclusions reached at the high-level meeting of the Assembly earlier this week on ways and means of supporting NEPAD assume supreme importance for my country.

In a similar vein, Sierra Leone also welcomes the commitment of the eight major industrialized countries, the G-8, at their recent meeting in Canada, to provide strong support to NEPAD and to establish enhanced partnerships with African countries whose performance reflects the NEPAD commitments. Sierra Leone, for its part, is determined to pursue vigorously the objectives set out in NEPAD, not just because we need donor assistance at this time, but more so because we believe in the soundness of those objectives as a vehicle for the eradication of extreme poverty, the achievement of sustainable development and the assumption of greater responsibility for our own destiny.

I began by assuring the Assembly that I came this time with one overwhelming feeling, a feeling of joy over recent developments in my country. Of course, the search for sustainable peace with justice and national reconciliation is a continuous process, and we are well aware of the challenges that we still have to face. However, I can say with confidence that what we have so far achieved, with the support of the United Nations and the international community, has provided the momentum for us to meet those challenges.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I wish to make a very brief announcement. As announced in today's Journal, the General Assembly will consider this afternoon, immediately upon conclusion of the general debate, the report of the General Committee, contained in document A/57/250, as well as the request for the inclusion of an additional sub-item of the agenda of the fifty-seventh session, contained in document A/57/231.

Address by Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Askar Akayev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Akayev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the lofty post of President of this representative world forum and to wish you every success in your work. Your election as President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is symbolic not only of the personal respect you hold, but also of the authority your country enjoys in the world community. In recent decades, the Czech Republic has been through some hard times. Because of that, you well understand the problems of Kyrgyzstan, which is going through a transition from its authoritarian past to a democratic future.

I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Han Seung-soo for his excellent work as the President of the previous session. The present session is significant in that the Swiss Confederation and, soon, the Democratic Republic of East Timor will have become Members of the United Nations. We warmly welcome the representatives of those countries, who are participating in this session of the General Assembly.

This is my first address from the rostrum of the General Assembly as President of the sovereign Kyrgyz Republic. 11 years have passed since the State of Kyrgyzstan declared its independence. What has brought me to the Assembly is my desire to share with you my thoughts on the most pressing problems of our national development.

First, I would like to refer to the International Year of Mountains, which is being celebrated this year pursuant to a resolution adopted at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It was proclaimed at the initiative of Kyrgyzstan and other mountainous countries, for which the problem of

the development of mountainous areas is of crucial importance. We are very grateful for the support given to that initiative. Thanks to the efforts of the United Nations, important events have already taken place at the regional and national levels. The outcome of the work done will be discussed at the Global Mountain Summit, to be held in our capital, Bishkek, at the end of October. We will create the most favourable conditions for its work, in the best tradition of Kyrgyz warmth and hospitality.

I believe the delegates present in the Hall will agree that among the many complex challenges facing the world community, the most pressing problems are developing democracy and guaranteeing human rights and freedoms. Those goals have been made a top priority in the Kyrgyz Republic since the earliest days of its establishment.

We are convinced that in modern day conditions, unless there is consistent democratization and human emancipation, progress and prosperity cannot be achieved. However, the remnants of the authoritarian Soviet heritage still has a tenacious hold on the minds of our people, especially among the elderly. There is good reason why former Soviet States are referred to in international classifications as transitional countries. Our experience has shown that the process of transition is particularly difficult not only in the area of the economy but in the minds of people.

On our road towards democracy, we have experienced both joyful success and bitter failure. When we analysed our failures, we came to understand that their main cause was a lack of democracy. In order to give the development of democracy a new and powerful impetus, I as President proclaimed a new national idea: Kyrgyzstan, a country of human rights. We intend to elaborate a democratic code and to establish a council for democratic security. Recently, in order to further the process of democratization, I took the decision to reform our Constitution and to convene a Constitutional Assembly. During my stay in the United States, the Constitutional Assembly is at the concluding stage of its work. The difficulty is that society has different approaches for developing democracy. Some forces claiming to be ardent supporters of democracy consider the essence of democracy to be the destruction of existing structures and the undertaking of new experiments. That would cause the transition from authoritarianism to democracy to take a very long time, indeed, while people have long awaited stability. On behalf of the people of Kyrgyzstan, I would like to assure the world community that we adhere to the principles of democracy and will confidently follow that path despite the difficulties and obstacles that we encounter.

I consider the problem of poverty eradication to be as important as the problem of the development of democracy. The problem has worsened under present conditions in the post-Soviet period. We are not the only poor country in the world. There are many reasons for this, and I do not intend to analyse them in my statement. Poverty has a negative impact on people's morale and creates many obstacles to developing the democratic process. Moreover, poverty is a breeding ground for extremism and international terrorism.

The world community has repeatedly declared its resolve to help countries in need to overcome poverty. Mr. George Bush, the President of the United States, promised to substantially increase assistance to poor countries when he announced the creation of the Millennium Challenge Account. We are grateful for every initiative of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and other international organizations, as well as of donor countries, for their assistance to poor countries. However, those efforts are still not sufficient.

Following the example of my colleagues from other poor countries, I would like to call upon the world community not to slacken its efforts in the campaign against poverty and to find new resources and new approaches in solving this problem. That would help reduce pockets of instability, encourage the development of democracy and have a positive impact on the world's development as a whole.

I would like to refer to the problem of international terrorism, which is the main danger to the world. New York, where the Assembly is now gathered, was witness to a terrible tragedy which showed the horrendous, brute face of terrorism. The Kyrgyz Republic, which in past years experienced incursions into its territory by international terrorist groups, has strongly supported the call of the President of the United States of America, Mr. George Bush, to create an anti-terrorism coalition. Together with Russia and our other partners and allies, Kyrgyzstan joined the campaign against the horrendous, bestial face of terrorism. We very much appreciate the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council,

and I assure you that Kyrgyzstan will extend all possible assistance to the Committee in its work.

At the global, regional and national levels, Kyrgyzstan is actively participating in the struggle against international terrorism. We have put our territory at the disposition of the military forces of the anti-terrorism coalition. In December of last year, our capital, Bishkek, hosted an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to strengthen comprehensive efforts to fight international terrorism. A Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at that time established a firm foundation for action at the global level.

Mr. Noboa Bejarano (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Anti-terrorism centres have been established within the framework of the Shanghai Organization of Cooperation and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Within the framework of the Collective Security Treaty, Collective Rapid Deployment Forces have been established with headquarters in Bishkek.

However, there are still many unresolved issues confronting the anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan, where, until recently, the main redoubt of international terrorism was located. On 23 September I will be meeting with President George Bush in the White House. I believe that the question of our cooperation in the struggle against terrorism will be a top priority. I intend to assure the President of the United States that Kyrgyzstan, acting together with Russia and our other partners, will discharge its responsibility.

One of the most important points of my statement to the General Assembly is to draw the Assembly's attention to a major event in the Kyrgyz Republic. I am referring to the fact that, next year, in 2003, our people will be celebrating the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood. Taking into account the wishes of wide segments of our society, I, as President, issued an edict proclaiming 2003 the year of Kyrgyz Statehood.

For the newly independent States that emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union, a search for our historic and ethnic roots has become a vital task. I am sure that, at the dawn of their independence, many States that are now represented in the United Nations experienced the same desire. Research carried out by our historians and a study of the works of well-known orientalists have led us to the conclusion the formation of the first Kyrgyz State took place at the end of the third century B. C. This has been convincingly borne out by ancient Chinese chronicles. The famous Chinese chronicler Sima Qian, who is considered to be the Chinese Herodotus, drew up a chronicle in verse about the existence in far-off times of a Kyrgyz State in the form of a Kyrgyz princedom. That State flourished at certain periods and at others merely smouldered. But national Statehood was carried forward by the Kyrgyz people for many centuries up to the end of the twentieth century, when it took the form of the Kyrgyz Republic, which later became a Member of the United Nations.

I would like to remind the Assembly that, in 1995, the Kyrgyz people celebrated a great event, namely, the one thousandth anniversary of our great work of folk literature, the heroic epic *Manas*. We are very grateful to the United Nations for the decision it took at the time to give that event international resonance. The celebration in Kyrgyzstan of the one thousandth anniversary of the *Manas* epic took place with great enthusiasm. That contributed to an unprecedented revival of national spirit and to the unity of our people.

From this rostrum, I wish to address the Secretary-General Kofi Annan and all the delegations participating in the work of the current session to ask them to adopt a decision to recognize as a great historic event in the life our country the 2,200th anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood, and to give it international status. That would be accepted by my people with profound gratitude. It would also do much to promote domestic stability and further consolidate the multi-ethnic nature of my nation. In cooperation with other delegations, my delegation will submit an appropriate draft resolution on this subject that I, as President of Kyrgyzstan, would ask the Assembly to support.

Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with the United Nations is multilateral in nature. It encompasses a wide spectrum of problems of interest to us all. We have received unwavering support and assistance from the United Nations and its specialized agencies at every stage of our development since the proclamation of State independence. I should like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude for that assistance. I also wish to proclaim from this rostrum that Kyrgyzstan will in the future remain firmly committed to the purposes and principles of the

Organization, and that we will do whatever we can to make them a reality.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Kyrgyz Republic for the statement he has just made.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

His Excellency The Right Honourable Sibusiso Barnabas Dlamini, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland. I bring with me the warm greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Indlovukazi, the Government and the whole Swazi nation to all members of the United Nations family.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joined the rest of the world in sadness to commemorate the first anniversary of the monstrous acts that took place in September last year. Our hearts once again reached out to all those who suffered on that fateful day here in New York and elsewhere in the United States, and to all those whose lives have been affected by subsequent events around the world.

In the aftermath of 11 September, the world is understandably preoccupied with the question of security and the war against terror. The Kingdom of Swaziland reiterates its strong commitment to do all in its power to support the global alliance against terrorism, and is determined to ensure that no aspect of terrorism, including its financing and organization, may be permitted to take root within our borders.

The progress made in some areas of Africa is part of a general trend of optimism that is spreading among all the countries on our continent. We cannot deny that there remain many serious challenges to address, both in terms of conflict situations and in terms of overall development. We have placed our trust in the African Union to be the vehicle for this shift away from the underdevelopment of the past, and the Kingdom of Swaziland looks forward to working with its fellow members to make the new body one that will truly address the challenges and make a real difference in the lives of our peoples.

Of crucial importance to the success of the African Union is the role of the developed world in living up to its commitments to the continent and to all in the developing world.

The Kingdom of Swaziland continues to develop peacefully and quietly, according to the aspirations and expectations of its people. Our relationship with the international community remains founded on the principles of peaceful coexistence with all, on the resolution of all disputes through peaceful dialogue, and on mutual respect and due regard for the sovereignty of independent nations. We value our membership in the United Nations and other international, regional and subregional organizations. Our cooperation and friendship with other countries of the world give us an important instrument through which we can address our national economic, social and humanitarian concerns. Of particular importance are our access to international markets for our goods and the attraction of foreign direct investment: both are central to our efforts to improve our economy and to provide jobs for our people.

Poverty alleviation remains our number-one priority. Sixty-six per cent of our people are living below the internationally recognized poverty line, and yet our classification as a lower-middle-income country denies us many of the funds and resources that are available to those in other categories. We will be working with the United Nations to ensure that that situation is corrected.

In the meantime, we are focusing all our efforts and available resources on programmes that meet the challenge of poverty in a sustainable and equitable manner. Our national development strategy, which is the result of direct consultation with the people themselves, provides us with a blueprint for Government action and conforms precisely to the principles of Agenda 21.

Despite all our best efforts and our limited success in many areas, we are restricted in our capacity to meet our objectives, not only by our lack of access to development funds, but also by a multitude of problems that are affecting us simultaneously and that we cannot overcome on our own. As is the case with all developing countries, we are particularly at risk in times of global economic difficulties and are especially vulnerable to disease and to the effects of changing weather patterns.

Overshadowing all our development challenges, however, is the threat posed by multiple health risks, including malaria and tuberculosis, but especially HIV/AIDS. AIDS continues to claim the lives of huge numbers of Swazis, and no family in our Kingdom has escaped the deadly touch of that disease. No sector of development is immune from the consequences of the very high and increasing HIV infection rates among our people, with enormous strain placed on our financial and human resources in the battle to cope.

We are trying our best in the light of our limited resources. A national emergency response committee on HIV/AIDS has been established to provide the focus for our efforts. We are attacking the enemy on various fronts, with priority placed on prevention, care, counselling and treatment. Perhaps the greatest tragedy is the effect on children who have lost their parents to the disease. We are battling to provide those unfortunate orphans with the means to continue normal lives, especially with regard to food, clothing and schooling.

We are ready to embrace approved strategies of medical care, including those that reduce mother-to-child transmission of the virus, and the prescription of anti-retrovirals for those who need them. However, the simple fact is that we cannot afford those costly drugs, and we must rely on the sympathy and support of others. That is why the Kingdom was encouraged by the expressions of commitment at last year's AIDS Summit and by the creation of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. With our hopes high for support from the Fund, it came as a grave disappointment to our people that our application to the Fund earlier this year had been rejected and that the criteria for selection of projects had become unclear. We earnestly hope that our second application will meet with approval and that international support from that resource, and from those of all who pledged their solemn commitments, may at last be forthcoming to help us in this national disaster.

In the meantime, we look to our own resources to fight the battle. One answer lies in the rediscovery of practices that are within our own traditions and culture. We have resurrected the rites of chastity and respect for self that served our people well for many generations in the past, and these are finding increasing acceptance in our nation, especially among the younger generation.

As we announced last year, His Majesty has also reached out to the international entertainment community for support, and we have been overwhelmed by the positive and heart-warming response. Next month will see the release of an album of music from international artists, entitled "Songs for Life", whose proceeds will go entirely to HIV/AIDS programmes in southern Africa. We look forward with great confidence to the success of the album, with its aims of promoting global awareness of the crisis in many countries and of raising funds on a scale that will help those of us most affected to cope with its dreadful consequences.

At precisely this moment of maximum disadvantage, the Kingdom of Swaziland and others in the southern African region have been hit hard by food shortages that are affecting 21 per cent of our people, largely as a result of lack of rain. We have been warned that the situation will deteriorate further next season with the likely advent of the El Niño effect. Furthermore, the food security situation has been exacerbated by other problems, such as the lack of clean drinking water in rural areas and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and deaths, which leave families with severely diminished resources to meet their basic needs.

Using our scarce resources, we are making every effort to help our people, and we have made one of our top priorities the construction of dams throughout the rural areas, where the crisis is the most serious. The Kingdom of Swaziland is grateful to the Secretary-General and to the United Nations agencies for their efforts to address those problems through the launching of a United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal in response to the humanitarian crisis in southern Africa. We are grateful for the response to the Appeal, and we hope for increased support as the famine tightens its grip on us.

We appreciate the direct involvement of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the humanitarian crisis in our region, Mr. James Morris, and we look forward to working with him, and with all our international friends and partners, who have already been so generous with emergency food aid, to make it through this latest crisis for the Swazi nation.

The review of the Kingdom's constitution continues, and the drafting stage is almost complete. The next phase will be the people's review of the draft document to ensure that their wishes have been met. That will be the final stage before the document is formally adopted. We trust that the international community will respect the fact that this final document, the product of extensive consultation with the whole nation, will be the true expression of the wishes of the people themselves, and will serve the Kingdom of Swaziland well for many generations to come. We are grateful to all who have supported us in this nation-building exercise.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would like to extend a warm welcome to the United Nations newest Member, Switzerland, and soon-to-be Member East Timor. There now remains just one group of people that is denied the opportunity to participate in the activities of the United Nations and its associated agencies. I refer here to the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China on Taiwan, a sovereign State and a constructive member of the international community.

These 23 million people have shown time and again that they are willing and able to contribute to the international community. At this critical time in the history of the world, which is faced with the challenges of instability, under-development and economic difficulties, we cannot afford to exclude from our joint efforts the resources and skills of the Republic of China on Taiwan. As a democratic, prosperous and peace-loving nation, Taiwan has displayed her readiness to assist the development challenges of her friends and partners, and has intervened in humanitarian crises across the globe. Taiwan needs the United Nations, and the United Nations needs Taiwan. We therefore appeal once more to our fellow Members to recognize the right of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to representation in the United Nations system, and to take the appropriate measures to achieve this objective.

We are living in dangerous times. Global tension and the possibility of wide-scale conflict threaten all the hopes for a century of peace, stability and sustainable development that were expressed at our Millennium Summit just two short years ago.

Our strength as an Organization depends on consultation and consensus among all Member States in matters that affect the whole world. The summits and special sessions that we all attend at great cost are valuable only insofar as we carry through the resolutions we arrive at and the commitments we make.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the fundamental principles on which the United Nations was founded still present the best and only chance for humankind to live and work in harmony with one another.

The Kingdom of Swaziland here reaffirms her full commitment to the founding Charter of our Organization and offers her fullest support to all its activities that have as their aim to make this world of ours safer, more equal and healthier for all its people. We look forward to working with the United Nations and her associated agencies in the coming year, to help us to meet the development challenges of our people.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Her Excellency Mrs. Kristiina Ojuland.

Mrs. Ojuland (Estonia): Let me begin by welcoming the United Nations new Member, Switzerland who has always been devoted to the cause of the United Nations and has now finally decided to join us. I look forward to welcoming East Timor as the newest Member of the Organization in the very near future. I would also like to pass on my congratulations to the newly elected President of the General Assembly.

Today I would like to address three subjects of major concern for our globalizing world: the struggle against terrorism, human trafficking, and sustainable development.

A year ago today, the whole world was still recoiling from the horrendous terrorist attacks in the United States. Immediately after the terror attacks, most States, including Estonia, and almost all international organizations expressed their solidarity with the United States.

We also associated ourselves with the North Atlantic Council's statement of 12 September 2001, which invoked article 5 of the Washington Treaty, as well as with relevant European Union statements and undertakings.

Estonia is actively participating in the international coalition to combat terrorism. We have contributed a search and rescue team to Operation Enduring Freedom under United States leadership. Our highly trained explosives detection dog team is presently serving in Afghanistan alongside the forces of the other countries, which are helping to restore order in that war-torn land.

We appreciate the noteworthy role of the United Nations and its Security Council in the universal campaign against terrorism. We fully recognize the importance of preventive measures and further standard-setting in this field. To date, not a single crime that could be classified as terrorism has been committed in Estonia. However, let me assure you that Estonia will continue to make all efforts necessary to fulfil its role in this ongoing quest for comprehensive international security.

Indeed, I can announce for the record that Estonia has ratified all the relevant United Nations conventions and has promptly presented reports to the appropriate parties about the implementation of the various Security Council resolutions.

We are confident that truly joint efforts, which make use of the input of all States, will eventually enable the international community to make remarkable progress in the global struggle against terrorism. In this regard, cooperation to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is of particular significance, since sooner or later, terrorists might actually gain access to these ghastly tools of doom.

Today, the United Nations faces the challenge of upholding its authority. For the sake of our future, and the prestige and relevancy of the United Nations, it is essential that the United Nations does not shy away from reacting effectively and decisively when confronted with real and formidable dangers. Full and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolutions is obligatory for all Members, just as is the effective enforcement of these resolutions.

Therefore, we value highly the decisiveness of the international community to implement the resolutions dealing with Iraq. Estonia supports the Secretary-General's further efforts to obtain Iraq's compliance with the Security Council resolutions. The return of the United Nations weapons inspectors to Iraq is just a beginning. Further acts will have to follow.

The President returned to the Chair.

The possible results of international indecisiveness and appeasement are well illustrated by the history of the League of Nations, which disappeared from the international arena, just as did some of its member States, including my homeland, Estonia. The result was an international conflagration that left a large part of the civilized world in ruins, the very ruins upon which the United Nations Organization was founded. This taught us all a very essential lesson — inaction can often be much more disastrous than action.

Another important issue which deserves to be touched upon here is human trafficking, in particular trafficking in women. The Estonian Government recently acceded to the three Protocols additional to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In June 2001, at the Women and Democracy Conference in Lithuania, the Nordic and Baltic Ministers for Gender Equality decided to launch a joint Nordic-Baltic information campaign against trafficking in women.

The aim of the campaign, which will continue at least until the beginning of 2003, is to turn the general public's attention to the problems of prostitution and trafficking in people and to initiate public discussion about the problems surrounding the issue of trafficking in women. The joint campaign is being carried out simultaneously in the eight Nordic and Baltic countries, with all relevant institutions concentrating, throughout this year, on the matter of how best to combat this problem. We hope that we will soon have some concrete proposals for drafting amendments to appropriate national legislation.

The problem of trafficking in women, however, is part of a broader series of issues relating to women, including their position in society, their participation in the decision-making process and so on. In order to discuss all of these topics in depth and to highlight

women's role in democratic societies, Estonia will host, in February 2003, a major international conference on women and democracy. I sincerely hope that that conference will help to further the cause of women's rights.

Another crucial issue on the global agenda, and the last topic that I wish to speak about, is development cooperation and sustainable development. Having participated in the Monterrey discussions, and in the wake of the Johannesburg Conference, I would like to emphasize that the most important factor for sustained and sustainable development is a clear national goal and a road map for achieving it. Estonia is in the process of drafting a special sustainable development strategy, a process involving the cooperation of both civil society and the private sector.

Estonia acknowledges the problem of environmental deterioration, and we have taken action to tackle it. Estonia has ratified the Kyoto Protocol — among many other international and regional agreements concerning the environment — and we will do our best to fully implement the decisions made in Johannesburg.

Since the successful implementation of recent international decisions depends largely on the concerted action of the various parties, communication and access to information are becoming key issues. Bridging the digital divide between the haves and the have-nots is essential if we want all countries to benefit equally from globalization. Thanks to our rapid rate of progress, Estonia has been able to support development in various other countries.

The creation of an e-governance academy in Estonia — a cooperative effort involving the Estonian Government, the United Nations Development Programme and the Open Society Institute — is a significant step towards bridging the digital gap with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. The academy will also be open to other interested regions. The academy will draw on the experiences gained in various environments, thereby providing broad knowledge that will enable participants to choose or create the best solution for their particular situation. Among other things, this project demonstrates the synergy that can be created from cooperation between Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Today I have spoken about some of the issues on the global agenda, all of which have been discussed at length at recent international meetings and conferences. Those discussions provided us with useful signposts, agreements and decisions. Now it is time to implement them.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Rashid Abdullah Al-Noaimi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Noaimi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour, on behalf of my country, the United Arab Emirates, to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Czech Republic, our congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. We are confident that your great skill and diplomatic experience in international affairs will assist you in achieving the goals of this session. We wish you and the members of the Bureau great success.

I also would like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his effective leadership during the previous session.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate the Swiss Confederation on becoming a Member of the United Nations. We also look forward to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste soon joining the Organization, which will enhance its universality.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his wise leadership and his tireless efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations in maintaining peace, security and stability in the world.

The States of the world are gathered here today at the beginning of a new session of the General Assembly, hopeful of reaching more effective and transparent solutions to the world's problems, based on fairness and justice, and of establishing peace in the world, which is experiencing instability and an imbalance in international relations.

In addition to civil and regional wars, more than half of the world's population is suffering from poverty, famine, epidemics and fatal diseases. Some countries are still occupying the territory of others. This is creating tension and instability in many regions of the world, which is endangering regional and international peace and security.

As the international community faces an increasing number of challenges, we are becoming more aware of the importance of complying with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of respecting the sovereignty of international law in resolving, by peaceful means, disputes, conflict and instances of occupation.

In this age of globalization and rapid development in information and communication technologies, the world has become a small village that can be reached from anywhere. The different interests of the world's nations have become intertwined more than ever. Thus the problems and sufferings of other peoples cannot be ignored because of geographical distances or differences of culture, civilization and beliefs.

The current events in the world prove, without a doubt, that the outcomes of conflicts and wars and the problems of poverty, drug abuse and disease extend beyond their geographical borders, reaching secure regions and threatening their stability. For that reason, the establishment of international peace and security in the world is the joint responsibility of all Governments and nations, of their public as well as private institutions. The dire need for a global partnership, working under the umbrella of the United Nations with a view to creating a comprehensive and calculated strategy that takes into consideration international law, human and cultural values and people's needs and suffering can never be overestimated.

The United Arab Emirates is well aware of the strategic importance of the Arabian Gulf region, and it is aware that the security of the Arabian Gulf cannot be separated from international peace and security. Furthermore, the United Arab Emirates, guided by the wise leadership of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, the President of the country, believes in solving disputes by peaceful means, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and the provisions of international law. On that basis, the United Arab Emirates calls upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to solve the issue of its occupation of the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Moussa, through bilateral talks or through the International Court of Justice. We also reaffirm that the United Arab Emirates has complete sovereignty over these three islands, including their air space, their regional waters, the continental shelf and the economic region related to them, as they are an indivisible part of the United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates has more than once shown good will and a serious desire to reach a peaceful solution to the issue of the three islands. This was done through two visits by his Highness, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, representing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Tehran, in addition to mutual visits made by the two parties. The United Arab Emirates hopes that those visits will contribute to bringing both parties closer and to reaching a peaceful solution for the three islands. This will reinforce the principle of security and of regional and international peace. In addition, it will affirm the principle of dialogue, peaceful coexistence, trust and good neighbourliness.

We have witnessed, during this session, new and encouraging developments regarding the Iraqi issue and the security and stability of the region. The United Arab Emirates welcomes Iraq's acceptance of the return of the United Nations inspectors, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. This decision will spare Iraq and the region untold tragedies and catastrophes. We look forward to real cooperation, one built on the United Nations Charter and international resolutions, in order to reach stability and cooperation among the States of the region and to resolve all remaining problems that hinder trust, stability and collaboration among the different parties. We call upon the international community to support the Iraqi decision, to exert greater efforts to solve the pending issues between Iraq and the United Nations, and to lift the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people and under which they have suffered for 12 years. We welcome, furthermore, the positive attitude expressed by Iraq towards returning the Kuwaiti national archives and properties. We urge it to show more goodwill and take more effective steps by freeing the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and those of third countries, returning the rest of the Kuwaiti properties, respecting the sovereignty of Kuwait and not interfering in Kuwait's internal affairs.

We also reiterate the United Arab Emirates' position with regard to the resolution adopted by the Arab Summit in Beirut in March 2002. This resolution rejects the use of force or the threat to use it, along with any military attack against Iraq. This position aims to protect the region from another unnecessary war. We reiterate, furthermore, the importance of

securing the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates is very concerned about the dangerous events in the occupied Palestinian territories. We express our sympathy and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their ordeal. We also denounce all acts of aggression committed by the occupying Israeli forces, and we demand that the international community, in particular the large influential countries, the United States of America and the European Union, compel Israel to end immediately all acts of murder, destruction, closure and displacement of the Palestinian people.

The United Arab Emirates renews its support of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital. Accordingly, we reaffirm our support of the Arab peace initiative that was endorsed at the Beirut Summit. This initiative comprises a process for a just and comprehensive settlement that ensures the rights of both parties. Such a position was expressed by United States President George W. Bush in a speech calling for the creation of a Palestinian State.

We also call upon Israel to end its continuous violations of the agreements it made within the framework of the peace process and to resume peace talks in accordance with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 181 (1947), 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), and 425 (1978). These call for Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian occupied lands, including the city of Jerusalem, to the 1967 borders, from the Syrian Golan Heights to the line set before 4 June 1967 and from the Lebanese Shabaa farms, and for the dismantling of all settlements in occupied Palestinian and Arab lands and for the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland.

Maintaining peace and security in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf region depends, to a great extent, on applying a more comprehensive and transparent concept that entails the removal of weapons of mass destruction. The fact that Israel has these weapons, including nuclear weapons, is a direct threat to regional and international security. Accordingly, we again urge the international community and relevant international organizations to pressure Israel, by all means possible, to abandon its nuclear weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities to the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This proposal aims to establish a nuclear-free zone, along with a zone that is free of weapons of mass destruction, in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf, similar to other regions in the world.

The United Arab Emirates watches with great concern the escalation in tensions between India and Pakistan. We call upon these two countries to deal with their disputes in a spirit of joint political responsibility that ensures the security of the region and the world. We ask them to resume bilateral negotiations to resolve their standing disputes peacefully in order to maintain regional and international peace and security. International terrorism is a direct threat to the stability of nations and to international peace and the world economy. In denouncing all acts of terrorism, regardless of their motives and sources, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms its commitment to relevant United Nations resolutions on terrorism. It renews its call for an international conference on terrorism to reach a clear definition of terrorism based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and regional and international treaties, conventions and covenants.

Political and historical events have proven that economic deterioration, poverty, lack of water, debts and foreign occupation pose dangerous threats to life resources and the security of human beings. They are a main cause of conflicts, violence, ethnic cleansing and instability. On that basis, the leaders of the world insisted, in the Plan of Implementation and the Political Declaration of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, on the common and differentiated responsibility to solve these problems and on the importance of providing the financial resources to achieve the goals of economic, social and environmental development to eradicate poverty, raise standards of living and achieve global economic development.

The United Arab Emirates calls on the Governments of the developed countries to honour the commitments they made in Johannesburg — especially with respect to the developing and least developed countries, as specified in the recommendations emanating from the Summit — and in particular the financial resolutions requiring the developed countries to contribute 0.7 per cent of their national production to help poor, developing States to implement development programmes in their countries.

We call upon Governments and relevant organizations to comply with resolutions relevant to sustainable development. The United Arab Emirates has consistently initiated and provided development, financial and humanitarian assistance to many countries, especially developing countries, that suffer from civil and regional wars and natural disasters. We also call upon the international financial institutions to adopt more balanced and fair financial policies to alleviate the developing countries' external debt burden. This would give them the opportunity to participate in formulating decision-making policies relevant to the environment and sustainable development and to help them join the global market, thus reviving and enhancing their national economies. They would thereby become productive members of the international community, effectively promoting the stability of international economic relations.

Finally, we hope that the debates on the items on the agenda of this session will achieve positive and concrete results, enhancing the role of the Organization in maintaining international peace and security and making the world a better place for human society.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): Let me first congratulate Mr. Kavan on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session and for the excellent manner in which he has been presiding over our deliberations since the beginning of the session. With the calibre of leadership he has displayed, added to his vast experience and wisdom, I have no doubt that our deliberations will be easily guided to a successful outcome.

Let me also express my delegation's thanks and appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for his efficiency and effectiveness in conducting the business of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

I would be remiss if I did not pay homage to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for another year of fine stewardship of our Organization and of humanity at large. Thanks to his leadership, our Organization has been able to cross a number of important frontiers in the year since we last met.

Lastly, my delegation warmly congratulates East Timor on its full transition to democracy, its successful conduct of democratic elections, its recent accession to independence and its subsequent admission into our United Nations family. Our congratulations also go to the Government and people of Switzerland on acceding to full membership of the United Nations as the 190th and newest Member State.

Our session is being convened at a time when the anniversary of the dastardly 11 September attack on the United States is being observed. We join the rest of the world, including the families of the victims, in remembering those who lost their lives and we pray that almighty God grant them eternal rest. Gambians were among the thousands from many nations of the world who were victims of the attack. This only goes to show that terrorism knows no national boundaries. In commemorating 11 September, President Jammeh declared a public holiday for people to stay home and pray. We must therefore harness all our efforts and cooperate effectively to address this wicked phenomenon and its root causes.

Let me take this opportunity to commend the Counter-Terrorism Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) for the good work that it is doing in enhancing cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism. In the course of this year, the Gambia was able to accede to all the major treaties relating to terrorism and we are currently in the process of implementing resolution 1373 (2001).

The year 2002 has been a busy one for us all. First, we came here for the special session on children. Then, we went off to Monterrey for the International Conference on Financing for Development, and we just recently concluded our deliberations on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa. At each of these important forums, we were offered the opportunity of rededicating ourselves to the noble objectives of our Organization, especially those that were so strongly evinced at the Millennium Summit and enshrined in the millennium development goals, which we all espoused.

Through our deliberations at these meetings in the course of this year, we have recommitted ourselves to striving in a more purposeful and determined manner to spread and deepen democracy throughout the world; do better in protecting human rights, fundamental human freedoms and the rule of law; strengthen our

cooperation in the fight against hunger, poverty and disease; do more to protect the weak and vulnerable in our respective societies, particularly children, the aged and the handicapped; and redouble our efforts to sanitize and preserve the physical and human ecology and environment. These are some of the important pillars on which world peace and security are built and which we must consciously work to strengthen and preserve from crumbling. That is the only sure way that global security and development, which are at the core of our Organization's mandate, can be assured.

We in the Gambia have been doing all we can to stay the course in the uphill task of nation-building under the inspired and dynamic leadership of President Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh. In the area of good governance, I am pleased to inform this body that, with special reference to the democratization process, following the much-acclaimed presidential elections held last October, National Assembly elections were held on 17 January and local Government elections on 25 April 2002. Mindful of the need to cultivate the culture of democracy and good governance, the Government of the Gambia has since developed and adopted a national governance policy and programme.

The main components of the policy framework are constitutional review and reform of electoral processes; enhancing parliamentary structures and processes; civic education; reform of legal and judicial processes and constitutional review; public sector management and administrative reform; and decentralization and reform of local Government systems. Clearly, governance constitutes an important component of our poverty reduction strategy.

Halfway through the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and in spite of all the commitments we have made over the years to reduce poverty and to accelerate the pace of social and economic development throughout the world, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening and the absolute number of poor people, especially in the developing world, is increasing. The scourge of poverty is insidious. It contains within itself all the elements that militate against its victim's ability to rise above his or her condition.

Therefore, fighting poverty calls for conscious, deliberate interventions that only the strong can provide to help the weak. These interventions come, for the most part, in the form of resource flows. Unfortunately, these have been dwindling over the years and, in spite of the recent commitments made by the G8 countries in Kananaskis in support of the new African initiative — the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), for which we are grateful — overall, the shortfalls in the fight against poverty are still huge and growing.

The President returned to the Chair.

The international community should not lead African countries to disenchantment. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative is, for the most part, still good only on paper, largely speaking. Protectionist policies and heavy subsidies continue to frustrate our efforts to earn a decent living through production and trade. And the promises of increased official development assistance and other forms of assistance over four United Nations Development Decades have remained largely unfulfilled. In fact, this session of the General Assembly will look into the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and the main conclusion will be that, by and large, the commitments made by Africa's development partners have not been met. We missed another opportunity for the multilateral system to work towards poverty eradication and social and economic development.

With special reference to the plight of least developed countries, I would like to add the Gambia's voice to those of previous speakers in calling for a renewed commitment to implementing the programme of action for the least developed countries for the decade 2001-2010. In that connection, we commend the General Assembly for the decision taken to establish the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We look forward to working closely with the High Representative.

The recently held ministerial meeting of least developed countries in Cotonou was indeed timely, and we call on the rest of the international community to lend its full support to the least developed countries so that we implement fully the decisions taken. We cannot, however, discuss the issue of poverty alleviation without mentioning the problem of women and children. With regard to our women folk, we need to focus more on the 12 critical areas of concern laid out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,

including gender inequalities. As for the issues concerning children, we hope that the follow-up summit held here in New York recently will strengthen us in our resolve to achieve the noble goals that we have set for ourselves to give our children a brighter future.

For our part, in the Gambia we have evolved a strong and focused policy on poverty, which we have articulated in a programme of action for poverty alleviation. The strategy is anchored on my Government's commitment to eradicate poverty in the long term, by increasing income through economic growth and empowering the population with the capacity for sustainable development. Our fight against poverty stands on five pillars: the creation of an enabling environment for economic growth and development, enhancing the productive capacity and social protection of the poor, improving coverage of basic services, political empowerment of civil society, and strengthened partnerships with development stakeholders. My Government is committed to relentlessly pursuing those objectives in line with the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals. In that, we shall be counting on the wholehearted support of the international community.

At this juncture, I would like to express my Government's most profound gratitude to our principal partners in development and to the donor community at large for their active participation at the sixth Roundtable Donors Conference for the Gambia, held in Geneva on 18 and 19 September 2002. We are confident that all the pledges made will be honoured so that together, in the true spirit of international solidarity, we will implement smoothly and successfully our national programme of action for poverty alleviation.

That is all the more urgent considering the fact that, during the rainy season this year, we experienced a long dry spell initially, resulting in the poor performance of both crops and livestock.

It is our hope that all nations of the world will redouble their efforts to live up to the commitments they made in Rio and, just recently, reaffirmed in Johannesburg. Even as we search for ways of taking our people out of poverty, we should also be mindful of the need to conserve our natural environment.

Of particular concern to my delegation are the destructive fishing practices in the South Atlantic. Despite the adoption of numerous international instruments to regulate fishing with a view to conserving fish stocks, unsustainable and often illegal fishing continues unabated in our coastal waters. The unbridled pursuit of profit without due regard to sustainability and long-term food security is the only reason for that undesirable situation. My delegation therefore calls on all Member States to cooperate with us to address this serious state of affairs and to provide us with technical and other forms of assistance to enable all affected countries to better police their waters in order to arrest those unsustainable and harmful fishing practices.

The momentum generated in Johannesburg must not be allowed to wither away. It must be recognized, however, that there can be no meaningful development without peace and stability. That is why we attach great importance to the issue of peacekeeping.

In the field of peacekeeping, our Organization continues to score remarkable successes. We appreciate the efforts of the Security Council to put in place a rapid response mechanism through which a multinational force could quickly be deployed to any part of the world. However, there is need to ensure that adequate resources are made available so that no peacekeeping operation is disrupted on account of lack of funds, thereby plunging the countries concerned back into a vortex of violence. Funding availability is also important to bridge the gap between peacekeeping and national reconstruction.

The determination with which we have dealt with threats to peace has paid handsome dividends in the period since we last met. That is why we welcome the great efforts made to distinguish the existing conflicts in Africa, especially in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

With regard to the Sudan, my Government applauds the signing of the Machacos Protocol between the Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). We hope and pray that the process now started will finally bring that protracted conflict to an end.

While we may rightly commend ourselves on those achievements, we must not rest on our oars. There are still some significant areas of uncertainty and volatility in our own West African subregion that we need to address. That requires a relentless effort.

In our capacity as coordinator of the Group of friends of Guinea-Bissau, here at the United Nations, we are calling on the rest of the international community to provide more assistance to that sister country. In that way, the democratization process will be consolidated and the country's economic performance enhanced.

We must bear in mind that ending hostilities is one thing and getting the system on the right path to social and economic development of the type that would eliminate the causes of conflict is quite another. In like manner, a successful transition into a democratic dispensation does not necessarily, in and of itself, usher in peace and security. In many of the countries where conflicts have ended, political stability remains fragile, and uncertainty and instability prevail. In those countries, there is need to go beyond the immediate political requirements for consolidating peace, to address governance in its broadest sense, including its economic and financial aspects, as well as the capacities required for strengthening it. That is the emerging challenge for the international community. We must devise mechanisms for follow-through into peace-building and be ready to provide the resources to progressively restore confidence and strength among those at the frontline.

President Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, the Government and people of the Gambia are fully committed to the search for peace and the resolution of conflicts everywhere, particularly in our immediate subregion. That is why we not only open our doors to our neighbours in distress, hosting many refugees, but we also work actively with them as well as with other members of the international community, including the Secretary-General and his able team to remove misunderstandings that could easily lead to a flare up of conflict.

The situation in the Middle East remains a matter of grave concern to my delegation. The Security Council must show more leadership in the efforts of the international community to contain and resolve the serious tensions between Israel and Palestine, which pose a grave threat to the stability of the nations in the region and the peace of the whole world. It is unacceptable for the world to stand back and watch as helpless civilians are attacked in refugee camps or are killed or maimed by suicide bombers. The suffering of innocent people in the Middle East must be brought to an end immediately.

My delegation strongly urges, therefore, that all the relevant United Nations resolutions on Palestine and the Middle East, notably Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), be complied with without further delay. We also fully support those who have called for the recognition of the State of Israel by all nations, as well as the creation and the recognition by all of a State of Palestine.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, there are still some unresolved issues. The situation between Iraq and Kuwait has still not been fully resolved, and we are still seeking a satisfactory resolution of the question of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons, as well as the return of the Kuwaiti national archives.

Within Iraq itself, we in the Gambia have always called for the alleviation of the suffering of the innocent Iraqi people. With regard to the other unfinished business of weapons inspections, my delegation applauds the decision of the Government of Iraq to invite the United Nations weapons inspectors to return to Iraq to resume their work. We have always upheld the view that parties to any dispute should allow the United Nations to assume its responsibility unhindered in our common quest for amicable closure to conflict situations. We therefore note with satisfaction the important statement made by President Bush recognizing the central role of the United Nations and calling on the latter to assume its responsibility. But let us also remember that we, all of us — nations big and small, rich and poor — constitute the United Nations. It can be only what we the Member States want it to be. The choice is ours.

In South Asia, we cannot be indifferent to the prevailing situation between India and Pakistan. Those are two great countries with which the Gambia has always enjoyed excellent relations. We are therefore calling on them, out of that friendship, to exercise restraint at all times and to withdraw their troops from their respective borders.

After years of hard work and tough negotiations, we finally succeeded in establishing the International Criminal Court (ICC), with the entry into force of the Rome Statute. We salute the tireless efforts of all those who contributed in one way or another to that huge success. It is our fervent hope that the Court, with the active collaboration of all like-minded States, will act as an effective instrument in the fight against

international crimes of all sorts and, by extension, extinguish the culture of impunity.

Turning now to the issue of sanctions, my delegation firmly believes that the time has now come for us to review the procedure being used to impose sanctions on countries and individuals. The permanent members of the Security Council, who determine who should be placed on a sanctions or travel ban list, do not usually provide evidence, either to the individual concerned or to his Government, to justify their decision. We have come to see that in many cases, such decisions are based on speculation and conjecture and that the individuals in question really did not deserve to be punished and humiliated. Thus far, most Governments have been very cooperative and, while repeatedly requesting to no avail that evidence of wrong-doing be made known to them, have nonetheless gone along with the rest of the international community in respecting the decision taken by the Council. Some of those Governments, mine included, are reaching the point of exasperation and have resolved that, unless the evidence being requested of the Security Council is provided, they will refuse to comply with any ban or sanctions imposed on their nationals. We sometimes wonder whether someone out there does not have a hidden agenda. As sovereign nations, we demand more transparency before acquiescing to our nationals being punished for wrongdoings that we have not been shown they have committed. The United Nations Security Council must not be a bully.

In like manner, the multifaceted sanctions imposed on Cuba are still in place despite numerous resolutions calling for their removal. A window of opportunity now exists for them to be finally set aside. It is in nobody's interest to continue to pursue policies against Cuba that have lost their appeal.

Sabres are rattling on one side of the Taiwan Strait in the face of 23 million souls, for their merely having claimed their God-given right to be recognized as a political, economic and social entity. The Republic of China on Taiwan is today the only country on earth that is not represented in the United Nations, contrary to the main guiding principle of the United Nations: the principle of universality. Article four of the Charter invites "all ... peace-loving States" to become Members of the Organization. The people of Taiwan have demonstrated over the years not only that they are peace-loving but also that they can contribute to all the objectives of the United Nations in the fields of global security, financial stability, culture, industrial and technological growth and sustainable development. Taiwan is not an insignificant player in the world production and trade arena. It is the world's sixteenth largest economy. It is equally highly developed in the field of scientific and medical research.

In recognition of its importance as a trading nation, it was recently admitted into the World Trade Organization. Logic demands that, for the very same reason, it should also be admitted into the World Health Organization in recognition of its importance as a country of highly sophisticated and developed health services; into the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization because of its exceptionally high standing in the fields of science and culture; into the United Nations Industrial Development Organization because of its most advanced industrial and technological development; into the United Nations Children's Fund because of its highly developed child development policies and programmes; into the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme because of its extremely well developed agriculture and its importance as a food producer; and into the United Nations Development Programme because of its huge official development assistance to developing countries for capacity-building and poverty alleviation. In short, it should be admitted into all branches of the United Nations family because of the tremendous contributions it could make to the ideals and programmes of the United Nations.

Taiwan is a vibrant democracy with high ratings on human rights, press freedom and the observance of the rights of the individual. It could contribute immensely to global security and the fight against terrorism. It is therefore baffling that this highly developed, friendly and peace-loving nation has been barred from membership in the United Nations for purely political reasons. My Government will not rest until this injustice is undone and the Republic of China on Taiwan is granted its rightful place among the comity of nations.

Still in the same region, with regard to the Korean Peninsula, my delegation would like to reiterate once again our unflinching support for all the efforts geared towards peaceful unification.

Finally, my delegation believes that the General Assembly needs to be strengthened so that it could play an even greater role in our quest for a just and equitable world order. We welcome the moves being made to reform this important organ of the United Nations in ways that would render it more effective in discharging its mandate.

This is particularly true of the Security Council. We in the Gambia will continue to add our voice to the clamour for the Security Council to be reformed in order to make it more democratic and more in tune with the realities of and requirements for global security in the twenty-first century. The credibility and relevance of the Security Council now depend on the reforms that we all have been calling for. The developing countries must be allowed a much more effective participation in this powerful organ of the United Nations. Africa should have a minimum of two permanent seats.

In conclusion, we urge all nations, great and small, to work relentlessly towards preserving the ideals for which the Organization was set up. We should all eschew behaviours that undermine the objectives of the United Nations and that frustrate its efforts. Multilateralism is the only hope left to mankind for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the maintenance of international peace and security. Let us cherish and nurture it. Multilateralism will thrive only if there is trust and confidence among all the actors. But a system that repeatedly frustrates and lets down one portion of its membership will malfunction and eventually become ineffective and irrelevant. We must therefore all do more to ensure that such a fate does not befall our Organization.

The Acting President: I would like to take this opportunity to remind speakers of our time limit for statements in the General Assembly, which is 15 minutes.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Tahir Baduri, Chairman of the delegation of Eritrea.

Mr. Baduri (Eritrea): Let me start by congratulating the President on his unanimous election to preside over the fifty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. His election is an honour to him and to his country, the Czech Republic. The delegation of the State of Eritrea assures you of its full cooperation and support.

Allow me also to extend to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo of the Republic of Korea, my delegation's deep appreciation for a job well done during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. Profound appreciation is also due to our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts to make our United Nations more responsive and effective.

On this happy occasion, my delegation welcomes the Swiss Confederation to the family of nations with great pleasure. We commend the decision taken by the Swiss people in allowing their great country to become a full Member of the United Nations. The same words go to the soon-to-be 191st Member of our Organization, the Democratic Republic of East Timor, a country whose sovereignty and independence has been won with sweat and blood, like that of my own country. Warm welcome from Eritrea, East Timor!

The fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the wounds and scars from the 11 September terrorist attack one year ago, in three locations over the soil of the United States, are still healing. Grief, pain and anger are still lingering.

At a gathering here at Headquarters this 11 September to commemorate the first anniversary of the attack, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said,

> "On 11 September grief enveloped the world, not only out of solidarity with the people of the United States, but out of shared loss. More than 90 nations lost sons and daughters of their own — murdered that day for no other reason than that they had chosen to live in this country. Today, we come together as a world community because we were attacked as a world community."

The loss of almost 3,000 innocent lives in a single day is so painful. The Eritrean people share the pain and the grief. They reiterate their condolences to those who lost their loved ones, and they stand in solidarity with the American people at this trying time. Indeed, the attacks of 11 September have inevitably changed the way we live and the way we see our world. This day has symbolized the alarm clock that rung around the world to wake us all. My delegation regrets that it took attacks of such magnitude to shake us from our unwatchful sleep.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in my country. The State of Eritrea has suffered it since its formal independence, in 1993, as the youngest country in Africa. The Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement and the so-called Eritrean Popular Islamic Conference were created and sponsored by Al Qaeda and other regional and international Islamic groups to perpetrate subversive acts in Eritrea for the last 10 years. In 1994, Eritrean security forces intercepted a mixed group of terrorists that included in their ranks Al Qaeda-trained nationals from several countries. In 1995, this group murdered four Belgian tourists inside Eritrea in cold blood. Sporadic cross-border acts of terror and subversion continue to this day.

In a statement contained in document S/1997/517 of 7 July 1997, my Government first warned the international community, and subsequently the then Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Security Council, that international terrorist threats from extreme fundamentalist Islamic groups were on the way.

The Eritrean Jihad terrorist movements, which are members of the Al Qaeda network, are now part of the so-called Alliance of Eritrean National Forces. This umbrella organization has bases and physical presences in some neighbouring, and a number of Western, countries. These groups continue to obtain sanctuary, as well as financial and other forms of assistance, from Western capitals.

As the fight against international terrorism assumes high priority and warrants concerted action, the Government of Eritrea requests full cooperation and joint action from the countries where these terrorist elements live, plan and launch their operations. At this juncture, I also wish to reiterate to the Assembly that the people and Government of Eritrea will continue to fight terrorism in all its forms.

Despite the declaration by the 1999 Algiers Summit of the OAU to make the year 2000 the year to end conflicts and to start a new momentum for peace in Africa, conflicts have continued to take a heavy toll on African peoples in many countries of the continent. This is indeed disappointing.

I come from the Horn of Africa, a subregion where conflicts and wars have been a way of life for many decades. The Horn of Africa is also a place that has seen many misfortunes. Recurring conflicts over past decades have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, displaced a staggering number of people and forced millions out of their countries to live as refugees in foreign lands.

The internal conflict in the Sudan is now the longest running one in Africa. Under the framework of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a subregional entity, the State of Eritrea, together with the other member countries, is doing its best to bring about a resolution to this conflict. We have come a long way in bringing the conflicting parties to face-to-face talks. There are encouraging signs, but we cannot congratulate ourselves yet. Our efforts may be considered a success once quieter days of peace, stability and sustained prosperity prevail in that sisterly country. I must admit that we need the help of the international community to end the suffering of our brothers and sisters in the Sudan.

In the same vein, the problem in Somalia, another sisterly country in the Horn, continues to be a serious one that the international community cannot ignore. The vicious conflict in Somalia will have long-term catastrophic humanitarian consequences if the international community abandons this unfortunate country. The United Nations and the world community at large must help the Transitional National Government of Somalia to stabilize peace and security in the country. The international community should rush to save Somalia.

Now, on a positive note, let me tell the Assembly the good news regarding the border conflict between my country and Ethiopia. On 13 April this year, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, a panel of five judges established by the Algiers agreement, made a judicial ruling on the entire 1,000-kilometer border between the two countries. The people and Government of Eritrea are pleased to see a legal solution to a conflict they never chose.

My Government believed from the very beginning that this conflict could not be settled by might, but by peaceful means alone. The pacifist A. J. Muste said it all: "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way".

The Boundary Commission has drawn the new border and is currently in the process of physically demarcating the lines on the ground. Completion of the demarcation is expected in the next few months. According to the Algiers agreement, which both countries signed, the decision of the Commission is

final and binding. Eritrea has reiterated its acceptance of the Commission's decision of 13 April 2002. Eritrea therefore believes that territorial claims and counter-claims ended on that day. In legal terms, the conflict ended then too.

Now that the conflict has legally been put to rest, the people of Eritrea want to leave this awful experience behind them and move on with life afresh. As Carl Bard said, "Though no one can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand new ending." What matters is the destination point. The people and Government of Eritrea are committed to turning things around.

At the end of this saga, my delegation finds it fitting to pay tribute at the General Assembly to our peace-loving friends and partners who helped us to get here. Allow me therefore to particularly thank the former Organization of African Unity, now the African Union; President Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria; the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan; the Government of the United States of America; and the European Union. We are grateful to them all for their valued efforts in this difficult and long peace process.

The year 2002 saw five important international gatherings aimed at bringing peace, security, human dignity and economic prosperity to the peoples of the world, big and small alike. Those meetings included the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, the special session on children in New York, the World Food Summit in Rome and, lastly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The promises and declarations of all these international events are tied in with the goals of the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration.

As we all know, those goals embrace the key dimensions of human development — related to poverty, hunger, education and health — stated as a set of time-bound targets. Those targets are: halving poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equality, reducing under-5 mortality by two thirds and maternal mortality by three quarters, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and halving the proportion of people who lack access to safe water. With 1990 as the base year, those targets are to be achieved by 2015.

Despite the promises of globalization and the many initiatives launched at various times to help the continent, Africa's economic growth is still lagging far behind. The success of development in Africa still depends on the political will of rich countries to provide financial assistance, on the one hand, and on the full ownership and effective execution of national development programmes by African countries themselves, on the other.

Having said that, I shall now, for the benefit of our partners, reiterate the five core principles underlying Eritrea's development strategy: first, developing the capabilities of our people as the principal asset and driving force of our development endeavours; secondly, establishing strong public-private sector partnerships; thirdly, striving to achieve self-reliance and avoiding chronic and debilitating dependency; fourthly, protecting the environment from the adverse effects of development programmes; and fifthly, establishing effective development partnerships with multilateral and bilateral development agencies, with Governments and with non-governmental organizations.

I would be remiss if I failed to bring to the attention of the Assembly the looming drought that threatens the lives of more than 1 million men, women and children in Eritrea. The failure of vital rains expected in the months of April and May has put their lives at risk. Famine is imminent if international aid does not reach the Eritrean people soon. I wish to use this occasion, therefore, to appeal to the donor community to respond to this pressing humanitarian need.

In conclusion, I wish to express my delegation's confidence that, under your able leadership, Mr. President, the fifty-seventh session will see much success.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Ion Botnaru, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Botnaru (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, I join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Jan Kavan on his election as the President of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Han Seung-soo, for the competent manner in which he managed

this forum during the dramatic period of the previous session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Swiss Confederation as a Member of our family of nations. We look forward to welcoming East Timor as the 191st Member of the United Nations in the near future.

One year after the terrible attacks of 11 September, we remember the innocent victims of those crimes. As a result of that tragedy, the world changed fundamentally in many ways. The international community agreed to start fighting terrorism in all its forms. The international anti-terrorism coalition, led by the United States, succeeded in significantly undermining the capacity of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization and in removing the Taliban regime, which had hosted it. The General Assembly and the Security Council took prompt action resulting in mandatory measures aimed at eliminating all forms and manifestations of terrorism and requiring Member States to take administrative, financial, legal and other steps. The immediate, effective and, even more important, united action by the United Nations against a terrorist threat that had now reached a new level shows the Organization's continued importance and viability. Once more, we saw the capacity of the United Nations to fulfil its noble mission by uniting and mobilizing us for this relentless fight.

The Republic of Moldova supports those actions and reaffirms its commitment to fighting terrorism in all its forms. My country has been taking concrete action towards the implementation of all relevant United Nations decisions, especially Security Council resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1390 (2002). First, concrete steps have been taken to consolidate our domestic anti-terrorist legislation. Moldova presented two relevant reports to the Counter-Terrorism Committee. Only months after those tragic events, our Parliament adopted a law to combat terrorism and a law to prevent and combat money-laundering. Relevant modifications were introduced to the Criminal Code. With its recent accession to the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing and to the International Convention against the Taking of Hostages, as well as its ratification[n of the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, Moldova is about to conclude its process of acceding to the 12 main international instruments related to combating terrorism. We call on all Member States to undertake new efforts to conclude the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

At the same time, as a new independent State, we ask for expert support in implementing some of those complex measures. Moldova has shown its political will to combat terrorism by actively participating in new efforts within the framework of many regional and subregional organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; the Commonwealth of Independent States; the Stability Pact for South-East Europe; the South-East Europe Cooperative Initiative; and the Georgia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova Group.

The stabilization and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan is a test for the Organization and for the rest of the international community. Considerable progress has been achieved, and we must commend the job done by the anti-terrorism coalition under very difficult conditions, the efforts of international donors and, above all, the efforts of the Afghanistan leadership, led by President Hamid Karzai. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, has repeatedly urged the international community to maintain its strong and active support for the Government and people of Afghanistan. We share the view that stability for Afghanistan must be seen within the context of a broader stabilization process that secures increased support from international financial organizations for all Central Asian countries.

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need for more substantial efforts to bring an end to the Middle East conflict. This year has been marked by successive terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians and by Israel's disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians. We support the efforts of the Quartet to restart the peace process on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions in order to achieve the peaceful coexistence of Israel and an independent Palestinian State within secure and internationally recognized borders.

We share the concern expressed by many previous speakers on the situation concerning Iraq, and we call on Baghdad to comply immediately and fully with all relevant Security Council resolutions. In that regard, we welcome the statement made recently in this Hall by President Bush recognizing the central role of

the United Nations and calling on it to shoulder its responsibility. Moldova, a country with an economy in transition, attaches great importance to the United Nations agenda for development and, in particular, the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey this year, the Doha Development Agenda and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg constituted an essential step in the convergence of international efforts in such vital areas as the eradication of poverty and the reversal of environmental and resource degradation.

The external debt burden, the lack of necessary resources, weak financial and banking systems, frequent natural calamities and droughts are undermining many of the efforts made by our Governments. Unfortunately, some recommendations implemented at the request of and at the insistence of some international financial institutions have proved to be relatively, or even totally, ineffective. While they accept primary responsibility for the well-being of their citizens, many Governments in the developing world are still waiting for promised resources.

My country welcomes the entry into force on 1 July of this year of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which inaugurated a new era in the affirmation of fundamental human rights on the world stage. Moldova has begun preparations to join the ICC, which we believe will become an effective, competent and equitable legal instrument.

The recent debates in the General Assembly on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) demonstrate that the world strongly supports the unprecedented integration processes taking place on the African continent.

The Republic of Moldova welcomes the creation of the African Union. We share the view that the United Nations and the entire international community must remain fully engaged in resolving the conflicts that still prevail in many parts of Africa.

Conflict prevention is the central challenge facing our Organization. The Secretary-General called for the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Poverty, inequality and injustice are most frequently named as causes of conflicts. Separatism is also one of the phenomena provoking instability and conflicts in many parts of the world. While we are mentioning the improvement in the Balkan situation, there are still a number of so-called frozen conflicts in the post-Soviet area, creating instability in the entire region. Despite many years of negotiations the separatist regime in Transdniestria continues blatantly to ignore any efforts made by the Moldovan Government, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other countries, to oppress the local population and violate elementary human rights. By creating new obstacles to the process of removing ammunitions and weapons, the Transdniestrian separatist regime is putting at risk the fulfilment of the Istanbul OSCE Summit decision, which was reaffirmed by United Nations General Assembly resolution 55/179 concerning the withdrawal of all foreign forces and armaments from the territory of the Republic of Moldova by the end of this year.

Another reason for our deep concern is the existence of a huge quantity of unregistered arms at the disposal of paramilitary units. At industrial sites of the former Soviet military complex in that region, the separatist authorities produce different types of weapons, which are delivered through third countries to other areas of conflict, thus assisting terrorist and criminal groups, as well as other separatist regimes.

The considerable changes that have occurred recently in the international arena have highlighted the overwhelming role that the United Nations must play in order to consolidate democratic values and institutions and ensure peace and stability. My delegation fully supports the efforts made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan toward reforming our Organization. Some steps have been taken to revitalize the work of the General Assembly. The reform of the Security Council will make it more equitable and consistent with the expansion of the international community and will better reflect new realities. We support the expansion of permanent and non-permanent membership, so as to let those Member States that are willing and able, to better contribute to the maintenance of international peace and stability.

The United Nations has also contributed to the economic and social development of my country. United Nations agencies and especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have actively participated in the implementation of many important programmes, thus finding lasting solutions to many challenges and helping our young democracy to

survive. We also commend the activity of UNICEF in Moldova for helping the newest generation of our citizens navigate through this difficult period of transition.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's warmest appreciation to the Secretary-General for the efforts he has exerted in order to maintain peace and security and for his outstanding contribution to promoting and fostering the role of the United Nations. The award of the centennial Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and its Secretary-General was highly welcomed all over the world.

In this year's annual report on the work of the Organization the Secretary-General writes:

> "Developments during the past year have affirmed the Organization's increasing relevance in world affairs, but a review of the work of the Organization is also a reminder that much still needs to be done to achieve the aims and goals of the Charter and the Millennium Declaration." (A/57/1, para. 230)

Let us work even harder to ensure that the United Nations is able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on the chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Patrick Albert Lewis.

Mr. Lewis (Antigua and Barbuda): Let me express my country's delight in having Mr. Jan Kavan preside over this fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. Antigua and Barbuda owes much to the Czech Republic and the adherents of the religious ideas of Jan Hus, the Moravians, who arrived in Antigua in the mid-eighteenth century and administered to the slaves in a manner uncommon at that time. With humanity and audacity they provided education to chattel servants, which was certainly one of the foundations that led to the development of a sturdy, progressive, and optimistic people, who this year celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of successful independence.

Let me also pay tribute to Mr. Kavan's predecessor, His Excellency Han Seung-soo, who guided the fifty-sixth session through a perilous period, yet found time to formulate positions to streamline our work and enhance the functions of the President. I wish additionally to welcome Switzerland into this body; we are mindful of the contributions it has made to our endeavours over the many years that we wished that it would become formally incorporated.

On 18 June 2001 Antigua and Barbuda ratified the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court and was most pleased when on 11 April 2002 ten States simultaneously deposited instruments of ratification, which brought the number of States that had ratified the Statute to 66, six more than was required to bring it into force. The reality is that this has been achieved at a remarkably swift pace, demonstrating that the Governments and peoples of the globe recognized the need for the existence of such a body. My own country followed the process of development closely and participated in many conferences, seminars and preparatory commissions on the subject.

The adoption of the Statute manifested a revolution in legal and moral attitudes toward some of the worst crimes on earth. Whereas many developing States have suffered under the hard yoke of globalization, the International Criminal Court, with its principles of justice and the rule of law in international affairs represents a plus for the globalization process. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done in obtaining worldwide ratification of the Rome Statute, ensuring that the Court will have the appropriate mechanisms in place to begin functioning as early as possible and disseminating information to stakeholders at the national and international levels about the ICC, the Rome Statute and its supporting documents.

The fears of some States concerning the operation of the Court when it is effectuated next year must be overcome. The Statute has sufficient checks and balances to allay all fears, and we remain convinced that the ICC will be a legitimate judicial institution to adequately judge individuals for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. We reiterate our conviction that this can be done while guaranteeing States their rights, as they are protected from any interference by the Court if they pursue such crimes at the national level, and that the prosecutor's autonomous power is accompanied by guarantees against using the Court for specious or politically motivated endeavours.

Although we are thrilled at the pace of development with regard to the Court, if we look closer it reveals the peripheral influence of Caribbean States.

It was Trinidad and Tobago that revived the idea of the ICC 41 years after the idea was first discussed. But the specific concerns that Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean States advanced as reasons for creating the ICC have been put on the back burner. We had pleaded for a court that would try, and sentence, those involved in the trans-shipment of narcotics, in carrying out acts of terrorism and in committing marine violations, including those in our territorial waters. I am sure that it is not lost on members that in 1989 we were emphasizing the need for the proposed court to try terrorists. The Court is an acknowledgement of that. It emphasizes genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes — and we support this. Yet we remain akin to Ralph Ellison's "invisible man".

During the previous session, there were three major meetings on what can broadly be classified as financing for development. At Doha, 142 countries agreed to launch the next round of World Trade Organization negotiations. Once again developing countries, particularly those with monocultures, found themselves stymied with regard to getting favourable terms for their agricultural products, but were successful in convincing developed countries that it was acceptable to override patents to stem public health crises such as HIV/AIDS. Developed nations feared that that would diminish the effectiveness of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and discourage pharmaceutical research, but proponents of the change argued forcibly from the humanitarian perspective.

Delegates from the developing countries left the conference hoping to get better results at Monterrey — a Conference whose title specifically referred to financing for development. Unfortunately, most decisions were made before the statements of the well-prepared delegates from both developed and developing countries could be structurally evaluated.

At Monterrey, there were repeated references by both developed and developing countries to the fact that half of the world's population lived on less than $2 a day. But to any objective observer, it was never clear from the pronouncements of the dominant countries whether they could best help by significantly increasing foreign aid or by more concretely targeting their assistance to make it more effective. Many of the developing countries kept signalling that both measures were necessary and should be undertaken.

It appeared that women were particularly disappointed with the Conference. The Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Noeleen Heyzer, declared, "you cannot talk about halving poverty without looking at the feminization of poverty". Heyzer was critical of the fact that the Conference was working with static poverty statistics. A member of her staff pointed out that new ways of financing development had to consider protecting domestic industries while preparing women to take advantage of new opportunities. Ms. Heyzer stated that the meeting should have considered institutional and legal barriers to women's advancement, such as banking systems that did not lend to women, and customary laws which prevented female ownership of land.

In reality, not only aid, but a complete overhauling of the present unidimensional focus of globalization should have come out of Monterrey. The goals — halving the proportion of people living on less than $1 a day by 2015, accelerating the process of providing access by individuals to clean water, and ensuring gender equity, particularly with regard to education — cannot be considered to have been adequately dealt with by simply stating that aid from the developed world would increase from $50 billion to $100 billion.

In addition, it must be recalled that only one third of the $50 billion is spent in poor countries, while the level of aid and the conditionalities attached to it makes it difficult to spend the rest effectively. The stringent conditions set by donors also have an impact on the sovereignty of developing nations. Thus, jumping from $50 billion to $100 billion without revamping existing measures of disbursal and implementation will not have the desired effect.

Fortunately, the developing countries, through their perseverance, were able to receive greater consideration in Johannesburg. The recent World Summit on Sustainable Development represents the strongest effort by the international community to promote sustainable development through the adoption, as set out in the Summit's Plan of Implementation, of significant and concrete commitments to improve the lives of people living in poverty and to reverse the continuing degradation of the global environment.

As a small developing State, my country sought to contribute to the overriding theme of the Summit:

the promotion of action. In this respect, we commend the Summit for the major progress made in addressing some of the most pressing concerns of small island developing States, namely, poverty and the environment, and welcome the commitments to increase access to clean water and proper sanitation and to energy services; to improve health conditions and agriculture, particularly in dry lands; and to better protect the world's biodiversity and ecosystems. However the Summit's failure to agree on a target date for increasing the use of renewable energy was a major disappointment to all small island developing States.

The true test of the Summit's success will be in the follow-up actions at all levels. While in and of itself the Summit generated a sense of urgency, commitments for action, and partnerships to achieve measurable results, concerted activity must be undertaken. Antigua and Barbuda therefore calls on all actors to honour their commitments and undertake the necessary actions to fight poverty and protect the environment through the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the General Assembly's Millennium Declaration and Agenda 21, adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. This will require a significant increase in financial resources, as elaborated in the Monterrey Consensus.

Antigua and Barbuda has every intention of adhering to the time allotment, but must of necessity touch on a few other issues. Unfortunately, we must recall the threat of terrorism. We have been working diligently to fulfil the United Nations requirements in that respect. We must, however, move ahead and plan for the future positively. We welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development and are eagerly awaiting the entry of East Timor into this body.

While welcoming East Timor, we must again express our deep dissatisfaction that a referendum has not been held in the Western Sahara. The question of the Western Sahara involves the right of self-determination, a fundamental principle of the United Nations. As long as the conflict remains, the regional security in a significant part of the Maghreb will remain at risk. Clearly, the success or failure of the United Nations will enhance or compromise the credibility of the current international system.

A small developing State, such as Antigua and Barbuda, cannot deliver a statement at the United Nations General Assembly without mentioning the imperfections of globalization and calling again for meaningful remedies. When we consider the present thrust toward globalization, we once again see our lack of significance in the global scheme of operations.

Clearly, globalization leads to the reduction of the sovereignty of States, with the weakest and the smallest being the biggest losers. Sadly lacking in the arguments for globalization is mention of the need to give consideration to the pace, direction and content of liberalization. We must bear in mind the different levels of development and the need to build up national capabilities. There is much insistence on free trade for the developing world and yet exemptions from free trade are claimed for the industrialized countries. Protective devices are built in for farmers in the dominant economies. These include subsidies, guaranteed markets, payments not to produce beyond a certain level in order to maintain means of processing, and all of this is done under the most stringent of guidelines.

On the other hand, when former colonial countries provide preferences to their previous colonies for investments, challenges are mounted through the World Trade Organization by multinational enterprises. All this is done with the clear knowledge that in modern times there has never been free trade.

Recently, the envoy of a very large country, seeking the support of Antigua and Barbuda for his candidature to a major international committee, praised our twin-island state for its prominence, rationality and objectivity in international affairs. He went on to state that small States are generally more objective in recognizing which countries ought to have positions on major international bodies. This is, in his view, due to the fact that small States can consider issues without having to take into consideration the pressures from large armies and the need to maintain international prominence. Consequently, small States view issues from the perspective of how policies affect the entire globe, of how there can be improvements for all people, and of what the consequences of certain actions will be.

It was an exchange that sobered and uplifted me for an entire week. Yes, small States can contribute much and have a significant role to play in the United Nations. But we need to be looked at and to be listened to. We have much to contribute. We will continue to

speak out, to speak up, to advocate, to plead and entreat. We urge that we be fully recognized, for we are positive, compassionate and forward-looking.

I end by offering to you the motto of my country: "Each endeavouring: all achieving."

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.